

PARTISAN REVIEW

VOLUME XI, No. 3

SUMMER, 1944

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PARTISAN REVIEW is published at 45 Astor Place, New York 3, N. Y.

PARTISAN REVIEW is published as a quarterly. Subscription: \$2 yearly; Canada, \$2.15; other foreign countries, \$2.30. Manuscripts will not be returned unless accompanied by stamped, self-addressed envelopes. Copyright July, 1944 by PARTISAN REVIEW. Reentered as second-class matter, January 20, 1940, at the Post Office at New York, N. Y., under the act of March 3, 1879.

Hotel Barstow*

JEAN STAFFORD

BECAUSE WE were very poor and could not buy another bed, I used to sleep on a pallet made of old coats and comforters in the same room with my mother and father. When I played wishing games or said "Star light, star bright," my first wish always was that I might have a room of my own, and the one I imagined was Miss Pride's at the Hotel Barstow which I sometimes had to clean when my mother, the chambermaid, was not feeling well. I knew its details so thoroughly that I had only to say to myself the words "Miss Pride's room" and at once my feet stood on the tawny rug with its huge faded peonies, and before me was the window seat covered with flat, flowered cushions, at one end of which was a folded afghan, at the other, three big soft pillows on which cherubs floated amongst blue daisies, holding up in their dimpled hands a misty picture of a castle. And I could gaze through the windows which overlooked the bay. On a clear morning, looking across the green, excited water, littered with dories and lobster-pots and buoys, I could see Boston and its State House dome, gleaming like a golden blister.

Often at night, I pretended that I was sleeping in the big brass bed, under the fringed white counterpane, my head upon the inflexible bolster. Turning over, I imagined I could hear the rattling of the loose balls which decorated the foot-rail and which, when I tucked in the sheets, gave the Spartan bed, with its hard mattress and thin blankets, a kind of saucy vitality. Suddenly, as if it were borne on a wind, there came to me the fresh, acrid odor of Miss Pride's costly soap which she kept in a large carton under the bed. She was part owner of a soap factory, I had heard, and so, of course, it cost her nothing.

Some nights, though, my vanities were driven off, and I could not hold in my mind a picture of the room nor could I summon up the rich old lady. For on those nights, I lay terrified at the sound of my parents' quarreling voices. I mocked the deep breathing they ex-

* This is the first chapter of *Boston Adventure*, a novel scheduled for early publication by Harcourt, Brace.

pected of me, but the air would not go down into my lungs and was caught like a hiccough in my throat. There was a raw-edged blade of pain straight through my chest to my backbone as though fear had laid back the sheath of my nerves. Anxious for morning, I lay on my back staring at the invisible ceiling or cautiously I turned over on my side, making out the contours of the sagging bed where my mother and father were enormously sprawled out and humped up, hissing their fury at one another. Until I was about ten years old, though, my distress did not continue after their voices had ceased and, exhausted as much by being an audience as they were by being the actors, I would fall asleep at once. It was not until then, the summer of my tenth year, that I learned, in what terms of childhood I cannot remember, that peace was to be desired above all things. The upraised voices, the bitter blasphemies, the profound outcries of hatred carried through the day. If, at the end of it there was a silent night, I lay awake for a long time waiting for the storm to break, and in the morning got up fretful for my vigil.

Our poverty was my mother's excuse for perpetuating the old anger. Although she had never been anything but poor, for her life in Russia before she married had been a tale of privation and suffering, still she had dreams of what it was like to be rich and, as she accused him, my father had promised her the finest of goods when he asked her to marry him. And what had she instead, she demanded. A two-room house in a fishermen's village where the sand seeped in the doorways and across the window sills, where the winter winds gained access through the cracks in the walls, and where in the summer time the heat descended from the low beaverboard ceilings in a steady, unmerciful blast. And had she to eat the fowl, the caviar, the strawberries and melons and pears he had promised? Our fare was no better than the poorest peasant's: day-old bread, *pokhlyobka*, side meat, and on great occasions, eggs. And did Shura Korf have a servant girl to go to the wine-cellar and fetch up champagne, Malaga, Rhine wines and Scotch whiskey, vodka and kummel? Perhaps four times a year my father bought a bottle of corn whiskey from a bootlegger, and in the sordid kitchen they drank it in hot toddies which neither pleased their palates nor elevated their spirits and made them waken the following day with headaches, biliousness, and intermittent vertigo. Where were the yellow dresses, the summer house and the island in the lake, the solid silver samovar and the little black dog and the chestnut mare? What a brazen liar he had been! He was not the clever, ambitious man he had said he was when on the boat, caressing her as they leaned against the rail

of the third-class deck, he had told her how he would have a great shoe business in the United States, selling only shoes made by hand and of the best leather money could buy. Why, he had declared he would have ten workmen under him! He would have commissions from the millionaires of New York City and Washington and Boston!

But see how it was instead: after ten years he was a nothing, a nobody. He *repaired* boots for the poor fishermen; he did not make them for the millionaires. He had not made a single pair for anyone but her, himself, and me.

My father, his pride lacerated, his shame festering would, at this point, retaliate. He would call on God as witness to his wife's failure to observe the laws of marriage: she did not honor him nor love him nor obey, but had made for herself a stifling little box of a life where she did nothing but slothfully brood and cry because she had no yellow dress. What man on earth would *want* to work for a creature like that?

I remember one of these quarrels especially well, not because it was different from any of the others, but because of what followed it on the next day. It was in September, the week before the Hotel Barstow was to close for the season, and I was awake, sorrowing that Miss Pride would soon go back to Boston and that all winter long I would have nothing to do but go to school. My father had gone off to the coast-guard house where he often spent the summer evenings, playing checkers and drinking home-brew with the men off duty. I was always glad when he went, for usually it meant that my mother would be asleep by the time he came in. But tonight she was restless and several times she spoke to me, "I can't sleep. Sonia, are you awake, darling?" I did not answer and I heard her turn over, sigh, and murmur to herself, "Too hot." It was always either too hot or too cold for her, and not even in the spring or the autumn would she admit that the temperature was pleasant. She would present her perspiring face to my father, or, in December, would hold out her blue hands and say, "You want to kill me!"

For some time I had been living with Miss Pride, first in her room at the Hotel and then in her unknown Boston house and I was either half-asleep or else so preoccupied with my thoughts that I did not hear my father come in and it was only when I heard my mother whisper, "I hate you! Christ God, I hate you!" that I realized he had got into bed and that the close room was full of his breath.

"Let me alone," said my father. "I'm drunk."

But my mother repeated her malediction over and over as if

neither he nor she would ever realize its full meaning. After a while, my father howled wearily, "Then go away, for the love of God!" He turned over and the bed springs gave a prolonged creak. My mother, though, knew that he was not asleep, and she began to talk in a monotone, marshaling the injustices she had suffered her whole life long until their perpetrators thronged the room. She began, as was her custom, with the beastliness at hand: "He tells his wife to go away. First he promises her he will be rich and give her a fur cape and French perfume and a hothouse with a gardener to grow white grapes. And then, in a little bit, he tells her to go away out by herself in America where she don't know how to talk to beg. He wants this wife of his to be a beggar! You wish it was winter, don't you, *mein herr*? So you could send me to the snow without shoes, me and my little girl. Well, sir, wait till the first cold weather and drive us out then. It won't be the first time for me. The child, she knows the words to beg with."

"You speak English," said my father.

She paid no attention. The past was advancing slowly upon her. I knew, because in the quiet I heard her sighing and I heard her rubbing her hands together as she always did when she was thinking of Russia. "It will not be the first time a man drove me into the snow."

"Shura!" implored my father. "Don't tell me again! I will go tomorrow to Boston for work if only you'll go to sleep now."

Heedless of him, she began. Under the night's still heat, her voice flowed like a deep, unbending river as for the millionth time, using the familiar words and images, she recounted the disasters of her childhood. It was a tale so fantastic that not even I, a little girl, could believe it. Yet it was one so horrible that to scoff at it would have been inhuman. In the pauses I listened but could not hear my father's breathing and I knew that he was wide awake, counting off each episode as it fell from her lips and calculating how many more were still to come before the end. As she mourned on, the heat was dispelled and the cold of Moscow's winter streets invaded the bedroom. As clearly as a few minutes before I had seen Miss Pride's afghan and pillows, now I could see nothing but crusted snow, a little cold, yellow sun, and the blue faces of poor people freezing in the gateways and the alleys.

When she was nine or ten years old, her mother died. Her father, who was a tailor and a libertine and a brute, commenced to drink heavily at the funeral dinner and continued to stay drunk for a week. It was in January and it was bitterly cold. The seven children, whom their father and his rioting friends drove away from the stove, kept

warm only by hugging one another while the revelers, warm as toast with vodka and the stove heat, poked fun at the shivering little bodies and the chattering teeth and the bright red noses. One day, Constantin Ivanovitch Korf began to malign his dead wife, calling her in one breath a whore and a pious old crone, though she was neither but only a good hard-working creature who had come to the city from the farm and perhaps had died of years of homesickness.

Here came a hiatus in the narrative and I knew that my father, like myself, was mouthing the words that were to follow. She brought out: "The Russians are always homesick people." It was a minute or two before she went on, and in the firm enclosure of the silence, I seemed myself to ail like a Russian and a hot cloud grazed my eyelids.

"There was a yellow-haired German milliner who sat on his lap and pulled at his beard. *Fräulein* Lili, she called herself. I suppose she had no real parents and that was why she had no family names. She would sit there plucking the old goat's beard and call him, 'Constantin, my little bear.' Ah, it was sickening!"

His grief had flown away like a sparrow and he shouted for a song from *Fräulein* Lili. One of the children whimpered whether from sorrow or shame or cold no one knew, but whatever its cause, the outburst was contagious and directly all the children were sobbing and wailing. You would have thought Constantin Ivanovitch would be too drunk to hear or care. But he flung the woman from his lap and stood up, his feet wide apart, shaking his fist at his sons and daughters. He shouted that he was through with his brats, they could freeze that night for all of him. Then he advanced and together they rose, holding up their little arms as if to thwart the blows from his hairy hands. They turned and made for the door as he followed, slapping their backsides until they were across the threshold. The door was shut. The bolt was drawn. Immediately the milliner began to sing:

Till with age my hair starts graying,
Till my locks have ceased to curl,
Let me live in joy and gladness,
Let me love a pretty girl!
Let me live my life in joy and gladness,
Let me love a pretty girl!

The children scattered, knowing that no one would take them all in together. Whether my mother wandered by herself for hours or for days, she was not sure, she said, for such cold as the cold of Moscow tyrannizes over the light and the dark; the sun is like one poor candle in a vast hall, or else, shining forth with a rowdy blaze, it burns and the kindled snow sears the eye. But at the end of whatever

time it was, she was taken into the house of a witch, so-called because of her profession: for a price, she mutilated men who wished to escape military service. She cut off their fingers or their toes or broke the arches of their feet. This Luibka was a dried and wrinkled old prune of a woman with a cackling voice and a bright, shrewd eye and hands which, even in idleness, crooked as though they held a knife.

"You would have come to Luibka, Hermann Marburg," she accused my father. "You would be too lazy and cowardly to be a soldier."

"I served my time," he replied dully.

"In Germany, yes, where everything is soft. But you would have come to Luibka in Russia where the food is scarce and the soldiers' boots are no good."

The *koldunya* was not a bad woman, my mother insisted, but was only the innocent slave of the wicked men who patronized her. The customers might cuff and kick the little girl who washed the knives and handed up the cloths, but the old woman never raised a finger against her and never spoke so much as a single word of reproof. And still, though she had enough to eat and a dry place to sleep, there came a time when the witch's kindness was not enough to stop my mother's ears to the screams nor to close her eyes to the bloody blades and the anxious hound who sprang from his corner whenever a goblet of flesh fell to the sawdust-covered floor. She was already a tall girl, about fourteen years old, when she left Luibka; and she was so comely that once she set about it, she had not trouble in finding work. She became a waitress in an officers' tavern. From two o'clock in the afternoon until two in the morning, she brought the gentlemen dinners and tea and suppers with champagne as well as the occasional glass of vodka and Löwenbräu beer, imported from Munich, the specialty of the house.

In many ways, my mother felt she had advanced considerably in the world for she was supplied with a pair of handsome uniforms and she was allowed to feed on delicacies, and her tips, because she was beautiful, were by no means trifling. And yet, with all her good fortune, there were times when she would sooner have been hand-maiden to Luibka, for the officers made such impertinent overtures to her that she could scarcely sleep at night for shame. Once, in her second year, a cossack whose advances she had rebuffed slapped her face in a drunken fury and his companions jeered her and to him they cried, "*Touché!*" A few days later, she fell ill of a mysterious fever. She recalled that two old nuns, friends of the landlady of the tavern, came to see her sometimes in the afternoons and stroked her

hot forehead with their cold white fingers. When she told them that her sickness had been brought on by a ruffian's spitefulness, they exchanged a glance and, smiling benignly down on her, they said perhaps God would call her to a convent.

All the officers were angry with Shura when she was well and went back to work, and as she served their dinners, they twisted her arms or dug their nails into her hands or stepped on her feet, and she was afraid to cry out lest she be discharged if the master learned how much his clients hated her. Once, as she was going home to her room a few streets away, a soldier followed and pushed her under the wheels of a cab; she was not hurt badly, but her face was cut and her whole body was one great bruise.

In her seventeenth year, she had saved enough money out of her tips and wages to set forth into the world. It was on the boat which brought her to America that she met my father. A week after they disembarked they were married. How great had been her hopes the day she left Moscow! Her fellow waitresses, clinging to her, sobbing with envy, had sworn that she would be rich. Disentangling herself and mounting the steps to the train she laughed and called to them over her shoulder, "Your turn will come. Come to a picnic on my island, my dears!" And how close to fulfillment had seemed those hopes when the fair-haired German boy, tall, well-dressed, smelling of expensive cologne, had promised her that fine house, that immense wardrobe, those journeys to Paris and to Shanghai and to the Panama Canal. Each night, as the old boat rocked and groaned through stormy water, he shouted his promises over the racket of the wind and the protesting timbers.

"What do I have?" she groaned. "Nothing. No dresses, nothing but slops to eat. Ah, Hermann Marburg, I hate you from the bottom of my soul!"

My father, now that the long, sad tale was done, had had enough. He laughed at her, and that laugh, made up of all the scorn of devils and all the resentment of the damned, made me half sick to death with fright and I was glad for the darkness so that I could not see his genial face askew and scarlet, for the sound could not help corrupting what it issued from.

"Hush!" said my mother. "You'll wake up Sonia."

But he only laughed the harder, gasping and choking as though this glee were a convulsion beyond his control. Then, quieted, in a solemn, even voice, he said, "The child should never have been born."

His words concluded the scene. Worn out, they went to sleep. Over and over, until my eyes closed, I imagined the day on which

my parents would die and Miss Pride would come to take me to live at the hotel, if they died in the summer, or in Boston, if in the winter. Or I watched the waves part and saw a dry path laid for me between the water's furniture and then I stepped forward off the beach and walked across to the first wharf in Boston harbor. I could hear the calm waves washing the rocks and the shore and although my mind was far away, I could hear their undertone, gentle and melancholy reiterating endlessly my father's words: the child should never have been born.

2

On the following morning, both my parents slept late, and I was on edge, fearful that my mother would not be on time at the Hotel or that a customer would come to my father's cobbling shop at the rear of the house and finding the place closed would leave and not return. My worry made my fingers all impatient thumbs and the fire would not start for me. Through the shimmering veil of tears, particulars of the room, aglow with morning sunshine, were distorted in a dream-like beauty: the stains of the dark blue sink under the window were invisible and it appeared, with the glittering water-drops that depended from its brassy taps, patinated with green, like some old and precious vessel. The crimson geraniums on the sill above were blurred in a tropical splendor. As the kindling caught, my eyes cleared, winking away the transformation of the sink and seeing once again its preposterously graceful legs and its drain-board bristling with sodden splinters. I counted slowly to sixty before I lifted the stove-lid again to see the progress of the fire, and as I counted, stared at the two pictures which hung one above the other over the table. The lower one was a barn-yard scene of russet hens and two majestic roosters avidly pecking at the foot of a pile of manure while beyond them there loomed a red barn from which stared out a thoughtful cow. The higher picture represented two little girls in white dresses and white satin slippers playing with five white puppies under the supervision of the snow-white mother dog.

When the kindling had caught, I dropped in a few lumps of coal, then waited until I had counted two hundred before I closed the damper. I gazed at one object until I had counted fifty and then shifted my eyes to another. We had three hard chairs with imitation leather seats adorned with lions' heads in bas-relief; a bright red step-ladder; a footstool made of a cheese box; a pea-green washstand where stood a pitcher and bowl, discarded by the Hotel Barstow.

Long ago, when he had bought the house, my father had put shelves up against one wall which were called "the book shelves" although they contained only a German translation of *Riders of the Purple Sage*, a Bible, my schoolbooks and a very old copy of *Harper's Magazine* in which I had one time read a bewildering advertisement: "Everyone wants a gold tooth. Now you too can have one by sending only ten cents (10c) for a complete Dento-Kit." The shelves were crowded with pliers, hammers, Mason jars full of bacon grease as old as myself, an empty caviar can which my mother fondled now and again in memory of the day, ages ago, when she had eaten its contents; broken pipes, broken knives, shattered sea-shells, a landing net, a wooden snake, a gauze bag filled with venerable headache pills.

Just as I lifted the stove-lid for the third time, the door to the bedroom burst open and my parents tumbled out, shouting at me to put the kettle on for tea and to run unlock the shop and to run to the Hotel to say Mamma was not well today and I would do for her. These tousled, foolish creatures seemed not the same at all as those hobgoblins who had rollicked and bawled and wailed in their temper tantrum the night before. My father, while he rubbed his eyes with one hand, patted my cheek with the other and said, "*Good morning, Fräulein*. Look sharp, there. Today is the day we get rich all of a sudden, *ni't wahr?*" My mother did not hear him, for she was running water at the tap for her perfunctory toilet.

My father gave me then a purposeless wink and nodded toward the box of corn flakes on the table. "Esel von Hexensee hasn't eaten his hay yet." This was my favorite joke. Out in the shop, in the dark little room that smelled of pipe smoke and leather, he made up stories, pretending that I was a boy named Fritz or a donkey named Esel von Hexensee, and if I were the latter, he would fit a saddle to my back and two Concord grape baskets for panniers and drive me up the Zugspitz for some droll, pious purpose such as taking hot soup to Fritz who had fainted from the altitude. The games delighted me and when he was tired of playing, I would beg him to go on. "Na," he would say, suddenly sober, "I am stiff from beating that *dumm-kopf* Esel," and picking me up like a cat, he would put me out of the shop and bolt the door behind me.

I drank a cup of tea that had not brewed long enough, swallowed a few spoonfuls of corn flakes and ran out of the house towards the road leading to the Hotel. The fishermen were untying their boats and calling greetings to one another. Their wives stood on the doorsteps complaining to their neighbors that it looked like "another scorcher." Mrs. Henderson, who lived next door to us, cried some-

thing to me but I did not hear her and I ran on, flinging back, with no thought of its meaning, "I know it!"

We did not live far from the Hotel, perhaps no more than a quarter of a mile, but because after the cluster of fishermen's cottages there were no houses at all on either side of the curving white road, it seemed a long and tedious distance. Here there were no shade trees to interrupt the glare of the sand and the dry flowers that straggled half-heartedly along the road were too dwarfed even to cast a shadow. It was a relief to take a turning and then, from a slight rise, to see the big white frame Hotel with its bright flower beds and its verandas where hung baskets of fern and ivy.

The Hotel Barstow was the sort of place which never changes and then, with very age, it falls and the site is used for a new structure. Such a day was impossible to imagine. Anyone who had lived there assumed that the stuffed hoot-owls and the Wilson snipes and the herons would go on forever patiently standing on one leg in hoary moss or placidly sitting on unseen eggs behind their glass cases in the dining room, that until the end of time the same old ladies, musty-smelling and enfeebled, would be offered cream-of-wheat as the first entrée on the evening menu. Forever, too, the same sort of pert, plump man would stand behind the curved desk in the lobby, fetching down keys and mail and inquiring after his guests' health.

Miss Pride, an early riser, was drilling on the beach, unwithered in spite of the sun which was already very warm. The clerk, Mr. Hagethorn, called from the veranda, "Well, Miss Pride, is it hot enough for you today?"

Unsmilingly she replied, "I observe no change from yesterday. Has the mercury risen?" Even in midsummer, she always wore black broadcloth suits and an olive beaver hat. She apparently suffered neither from the heat nor from the cold, for she did not shiver or perspire, and she was never heard to discuss the temperature.

I slackened my pace in order to hold her in my vision: straight as a gun-barrel, she carried her lengthy shadow up and down the golden sand; or she rested it, squarely facing Boston, looking with her formidable eyes into the very conscience of her care-taker who was probably loafing on the job. I had heard someone say of my mother, "She is beautiful except in one thing, her eyes are too large." I believed, therefore, that Miss Pride was beautiful for hers were very small. They were eyes more like a bird's than any other creature's: that is, such was their intensity and their sharp change of direction (they never wandered, but rather disconnected their focus from one point of concentration and abruptly fixed it upon the next) that they

gave the impression of being flat to the skull or slightly convex, that they had a container more like a plate than a socket. They were "on" her head rather than "in" it. I suppose in her passport they were called "gray" or "hazel," but to me they were "cold gold" and were like the yellow haze that followed sundown when the shine of the sand was gone.

I hesitated a moment in the hope that she might turn and greet me. A sigh, involuntary and profound, ruffled up through my lips and when it had passed, I ran to the back of the Hotel. Without explaining to the head chambermaid that my mother was ill, I snatched a mop and a broom and a dust-cloth from the closet off the kitchen and ran up the backstairs two at a time. For I wanted to repeat the strange experience I had once had of regarding Miss Pride through the windows of her very own bedroom. She was still on the beach when I stole to the central window. Now a few bathers had come for an early dip and Miss Pride was plowing up and down through the sand, fixing them with her clear, indifferent eyes as though, without loss of dignity to herself, her gaze could penetrate them to their very giblets. As I watched her, taking in with admiration each detail of her immaculate attire and her proud carriage, I heard, from the adjoining room, embedded in a yawn, the waking squeal of Mrs. McKenzie, a garrulous and motherly old woman whom I had always disliked. Her room was no pleasure to clean: her bed was strewn with corsets and short-sleeved nightdresses, and on her bedside table, I often found drying apple cores which I removed gingerly, having in my mind an image of her with her sparse hair unpinned sitting up in bed cropping with her large false teeth. Upon the bureau, amongst sticky bottles of vile black syrups and tonics and jars of fetid salve, there lay her bunion plasters and her ropes of brown hair which she sometimes arranged in a lofty cone on top of her head. Usually she was in the room when I entered and she saluted me with disgusting moonshine as "mother's little helper" or asked me if my "beauteous mamma" was sick.

Now in Miss Pride's room, there was never anything amiss. Perhaps once or twice a summer, I found a bottle of imported wine or whiskey on her writing desk; this was the only medicine she took and she took it regularly in small quantities. On the bureau, the china hair receiver did not receive a wisp of hair, and there were neither spots nor foreign objects upon the white linen runner. A hat-pin holder, sprouting long, knobbed needles, two cut-glass cologne bottles, and a black glove-box, shaped like a small casket, were reflected in the clear swinging mirror. Though I should have loved to

dearly, I had not the courage to investigate the drawers which were always neatly shut, but I was sure that they were in scrupulous order. The other old ladies, almost without exception, allowed the feet of stockings and the straps of camisoles to stream from each gaping tier like so many dispirited banners.

As I watched, Miss Pride ascended the steps that led from the Hotel beach, and I knew that now she would enter the dining room and, after she had eaten one boiled egg and one slice of toast, she would examine the newspaper over her coffee while all about her, her coevals would be prattling of their sound sleep or their insomnia, depending on how the dinner of the night before had affected them. It seemed to me that Miss Pride looked up and saw me even though my face was hidden by the marquisette curtains and my body was behind the heavy drapery. I backed away from the window and began to run the oiled mop over the edges of the floor which the rug did not cover. While I worked, I heard Mrs. McKenzie thrashing about in the bed and rise finally, stumbling over her shoes, bumping against the furniture and repeating her vociferous yawn. The sound of the bed rolling across the floor, as I pulled it out to make it, roused her to rap on the wall and cry, "Good morning, Mrs. Marburg! I've been a lazybones again today!"

I did not answer. There was something in the tone of her voice, a quality of dampness—as though the words themselves were kisses from unminded lips—which embarrassed me. She called again, "Yoo, hoo, Mrs. Marburg!"

"It's Sonie," I grudgingly gave out.

"Oh. Well, Sonie, I'll be out of my room in three shakes of a lamb's tail and then you can come get me straight."

"Yes, ma'am."

"Get yourself a lemon drop, dear!"

Presently I heard her door open and close and heard her toil down the stairs, one dropsical foot at a time. I now worked rapidly, brushing my cloth over the bedside table, the writing desk, and the bureau, plumping up the cherub pillows and setting the bolster precisely at the head of the bed. When I had finished, I stood for a few minutes before the mirror and, as I had done many times before, pulled out the stoppers of the bottles and inhaled their clean, alcoholic fragrance. I opened the black box and gazed upon the white silk button gloves, the yellowing white kid and black chamois ones, amongst which were scattered single cuff-links, broken bone buttons, a mysterious, starshaped brooch and three edible beads. My brief survey finished, I sat down before the desk and though I touched nothing,

I took in everything: the brass letter opener with its carved wood scabbard, the matching ink-pot and pen and the dark green blotter in a brown leather holder, the calendar which gave the date, September 7, 1925. A week from today she would leave. All winter she would live in a house I had not seen and could not imagine, a house of which I knew nothing except that it was on the celebrated Beacon Hill, perhaps close by the luminous dome of the State House. My sorrow was reinforced when I saw a stamped letter, addressed in her careful hand to her niece, Miss Hopestill Mather, Camp Pocahontas, Southport, Maine. For, if I could not envisage the house which stole her away from me each autumn, I knew exactly what the little girl looked like who lived with her. Once, the summer before, when she was ten years old and I was nine, she had been brought by a small nervous woman, Mrs. Brooks, her second cousin, to have luncheon at the Hotel. She had been so self-assured, carried her head with such a grown-up dignity that she seemed advanced in her teens. I, who that day had been charged with filling the water glasses, stared from the sideboard at her bright red hair, caught at the left temple by a green ribbon and falling down her back, long and straight, over a white batiste dress, printed with tiny yellow flowers. As I passed by Miss Pride's table on my way to Mrs. Prather, I heard her say, "How absurd, Auntie! You ought to know the counselors are all stupid." And later, when I had returned to my post where, sick with envy, of her voice and her cultured language I felt my face color and the pulse in my forehead leap, she signaled me with her white hand calling, "Waitress! Water, please."

I could linger no more in Miss Pride's room, but cleverly I omitted to put clean towels on the rack beside the wash-stand in order that I might return after my other work was done, this afternoon when she had gone for a drive.

It was nearly luncheon time when I came into the lobby to dust the albums on the brocade covers of the round tables, and all the old ladies were sprily exercising the rocking chairs on the veranda, having a chat about relatives with diabetes and friends with Bright's Disease, and talking of their own improper pains, their bizarre sensations in the region of the gall-bladder, and their physicians who were either "very understanding" or obscurely "unsatisfactory."

"I love cucumbers," Mrs. Prather was saying, "but they don't love me."

Mrs. McKenzie replied, "I'm the same way with seedy things. They give me heart-burn and of course they clog the colon."

I drew back my hand with horror from the golden callosities of

the "worked" covers on the albums for, smooth and round, they resembled human organs as I recalled them from the colored diagrams in my hygiene book.

A voice I did not know well inquired, "Has the Hotel Barstow always had a restricted clientele?"

"No, indeed!" cried Mrs. McKenzie. "About three years ago, a new manager came, a really vulgar person whom I'm perfectly certain was a Jew although his name was Mr. Watkins. And by the time I arrived—I came a little late that year—the Hotel was swarming with uninvestigated guests. I daresay we won't forget Mr. Johnson in a hurry, will we?"

The story of Mr. Johnson, one of the veranda favorites, was retold for the newcomer. From what walk of life he had come was impossible for anyone to tell. But he was no gentleman as a child could see in the first glance at his reversible silk shirts, his diamond tie-pin, his bright orange oxfords and his loud, checked jacket. He teased the old ladies by putting a bottle of bootleg whiskey on his table in the dining room in imitation of their phials of medicine. "Oh, my hair hurts so," he would say and take a drink. He carried a walking stick, although he was neither a cripple nor a great walker, and the other guests thought it was probably hollow and contained a rapier.

"I've heard of such a thing, you know," said Mrs. McKenzie. "When my poor sister was in Wiesbaden taking the baths for her arthritis which nothing on earth would cure—how much money she spent I couldn't tell you and she must have suffered twenty years—there was a man living in a pension a block away who was proved beyond a shadow of a doubt to have a rapier in his stick."

"But now," pursued the unfamiliar voice, "now your manager is discreet?"

"Oh, Mr. Hagerthorn is the soul of caution. He caters solely to those of us who have been coming here for at least twenty years. We call ourselves the Barstow family."

Mr. Hagerthorn, pleased with the compliment that had come to his attentive pink ears, bawled in authority, "Sonie, clean up around the ferns there. Don't dawdle." The ferns and several potted palms made a little triangular garden in the far corner of the lobby, and as I made my way towards them, I perceived Miss Pride, sitting erect on a straight chair, half hidden by the foliage. This was her reading hour. Today she held *The Atlantic Monthly* directly in front of her. Her thin lips were set in concentration beneath her short, sharp nose with its contracted nares. She did not look up when I knelt down,

three feet away from her and began to brush the fallen fronds into a dust-pan. I kept my eye on her and presently I saw a frown invade her high forehead. I did not know if she had come to a word she did not understand or if she were annoyed with the chatter that came through the screen door. Evidently the old ladies were now scrutinizing the fashionable young people on the beach who had drifted down from the smarter hotels and who were clad in bathing costumes that exposed long, sun-browned legs. "I just don't know," said someone, "I just don't know. Are we advancing? Or are we going back to paganism? I don't say it's immoral to expose the legs to the public eye: I say it's not fastidious. Why, our chambermaid, Mrs. Marburg, has more modesty than those young ladies out there who either have come out or will come out at the Chilton Club."

Even at this mention of my mother and although she must have known that I was beside her, Miss Pride did not look at me. Her frown deepened; reluctantly she closed her magazine just as the only male guest of the Hotel, Mr. Brock, slipped quietly through two pots of fern, carrying with him a folding chair which he set down beside hers. What impressed me in that moment was that the frown, which had lasted two or three minutes, showed that she had known of his approach long before I either heard or saw him.

"Good morning! I hope I am not disturbing you at your devotions?" The chuckle following his remark was not returned and Miss Pride only said, "Good morning."

Mr. Brock was a soft-spoken and scholarly old man who, although he had come from New York, called himself "a professional Bostonian." He was the victim of a delusion which he propounded, whenever he had the opportunity, to myself, my mother, the Mexican gardener, Gonzales, to Mr. Hagethorn, to the waitresses. He believed that of all languages, only the English was capable of vulgarity, and he claimed that bad American books were transformed by translation into promising, if not brilliant, prose. He had made a collection of such translation, having E. P. Roe, for example, rendered into French and the Elsie Dinsmore books into Spanish. He had given my father his copy of *Riders of the Purple Sage* and my father, although he was totally indifferent to Mr. Brock's thesis, so thoroughly enjoyed the book for its adventure that the old man danced for joy, sure that this was the proof of the pudding.

Now he produced a leather-bound book from his brief case and handing it to Miss Pride, said, "I sought you out to show you my latest find. This is *Bob, Son of Battle* in German or *Bob der graue Hund von Kenmuir* and it is enchanting. Would you care to read it?"

"No, Mr. Brock, I would not," said Miss Pride sternly. "I do not share your enthusiasm for foreign languages. And as for dog-books I had no use for them in my girlhood and feel quite sure I would find them even less to my taste now that I have passed beyond the age for juvenile literature."

He was not rebuffed. "I admire your linguistic singleness, Miss Pride, since in you I am not sure it is the result of strong nationalistic convictions. Alas, we are not all by opinion or antecedents eligible for membership in the English Speaking Union."

"I am not a member of the English Speaking Union," she returned. "But in any case your remark is, to use a foreign phrase, a *non sequitur*."

Mr. Brock, receiving the book which she extended, allowed his disappointment to show briefly in his foolish old face and then, catching sight of me, he cried, "Now here is someone whose father will appreciate the book." In a voice a little lower but not intended to be inaudible to me, he added, "Did you realize that this child's father is an educated man?"

"I believe I haven't had the pleasure of knowing him." Miss Pride took me in, perhaps for the first time since I had been coming to the Hotel, and I felt that in her rapid but comprehensive examination of my face and person she had discerned everything about me, that she knew I had once broken my collarbone, that I did poorly in arithmetic and singing and well in reading, and that brushing my teeth had not yet become habitual with me.

"Yes," Mr. Brock went on, "Hermann Marburg, the Chichester cobbler, is an educated man. A graduate of the *gymnasium* of Würzburg, Germany, and, except for an ineffacable accent which I myself find appealing, has been completely bilingual since the age of eleven, and partially trilingual—his third language, of course, being French—since the age of fifteen."

Miss Pride did not seem impressed but rather than humiliate me, as I assumed, said nothing. "I have had several illuminating conversations with Mr. Marburg, sometimes in German, sometimes in English. I neglected to mention, by the way, that through his wife he has also picked up quite a considerable Russian vocabulary. Now a graduate of a *gymnasium*, Miss Pride, as you are perhaps not aware, is, if anything better educated than a candidate for an American baccalaureate degree. Yet the *gymnasium* is the counterpart of our preparatory school!"

"What do they learn?" inquired Miss Pride, frankly dubious.

"Having been something of a Latinist myself at Mr. Greenough's,

naturally I admire Mr. Marburg's firm classical foundation. I must admit his Latin is less literary than ecclesiastical, for he was trained by the Franciscans, but it is, nevertheless, good, sound Latin. In addition he knows history. Oh, he knows his history *well*, Miss Pride! Roman and the French Revolution are his specialties. And then, although he's a modest man, I have no doubt in the world he could put many of our Harvard men to shame in the field of philosophy. Literature he is not so keen on although he did drop the remark that he had at one time been a great admirer of Goethe. Now there is a man who has the perspicacity to see what I mean when I say that in his language *Riders of the Purple Sage* is a superb piece of craftsmanship."

Miss Pride had had enough. She rose and her face, shaded by the wide brim of her hat, represented the pure substance of scorn. "You will forgive me, Mr. Brock, for finding your crotchet fantastic. It is my cantankerous opinion, sir, that you do not believe this nonsense yourself, but that you wish to disguise your appetite for rubbish. Not to put too fine a point on it, how could you, without the aid of some such camouflage, indulge yourself in Elsie Dinsmore at the age of seventy-two?"

Mortally wounded, he gave her a wan smile. "Your wit is all that it is said to be, ma'am."

Less coldly but with the same firmness she went on, "What interests me about this Mr. Marburg is, does he make his shoes well? Does he know *that* craft, Mr. Brock, as well as his Latin?"

"Oh, I have no idea. I never discuss business with him."

Miss Pride was looking at my feet, shod in a pair of white mocasins which my father had made. I was ashamed that they were so dirty and that my socks were ragged. She turned at the announcement of luncheon, but I did not fail to hear her say to Mr. Brock as they crossed the lobby, "I gather that he knows his business and has little of it."

After Audrey, the headwaitress, and I had set the tables for dinner, I went upstairs with Miss Pride's fresh towels. The corridor was quiet, for all the guests were napping. I could hear, through the wall by Miss Pride's bed, the faint popping of air in Mrs. McKenzie's nose as she slept deeply. Immediately I took my post at the windows and in about a quarter of an hour, I saw Miss Pride go down the wooden stairs of the porch, pinching the hand-rail with her gloved fingers. Then she waited on the lawn for her high, black limousine. Once I had seen in it vases for flowers on the sides, hanging like pic-

tures in a house. I believed she had other decorative furnishings in the back seat as, perhaps, a needlepoint footstool and a writing board. What if she even had a tea table and at a suitable hour and place, ordered the car to be stopped and then served herself tea! I would dwell on this enchanting thought sometimes as long as half an hour, seeing with an overwhelming happiness the actual seeds of the strawberry jam.

Here came the car! Slipping round the corner of the Hotel, its long black snout caught the rays of the sun which shot fitfully into my eyes. It stopped and Mac, the chauffeur, stepped out. He was a thin, sharp, silvery young man who, in his gray livery, looked like an upright rat. He suffered from some strange distemper that caused his feet to swell, but though the valetudinarians of the veranda perpetually foretold Miss Pride's doom when the man while driving should die at the wheel (for they were enough acquainted with his symptoms to know that foot swelling indicated a rheumatic heart for which there was *no cure*), she kept him on and about twice a week was handed into the car by his lean, gray paws which, since they went out and withdrew so quickly, seemed to abhor their contact with the dessicated elbow that they briefly cupped.

"Well, Mac," came her voice, "I trust we are all in order. I must run in to Pinckney Street today."

So that was the name of it: Pinckney Street. I repeated the words to myself and the house where she lived all winter now seemed less strange because it was not merely in Boston but was in a specific street with a specific number of houses. Henceforth my daydreams would not begin with the vague condition, "When I live in Boston with Miss Pride," but with, "When I live on Pinckney Street."

"Oh, but before we go," she said, her foot on the running board, "I want you to take me to the shoemaker here. A Mr. Marburg."

The car drove off and I slipped into the chair at the writing desk, faint with a conflict. For the joy I felt in Miss Pride's going to call on my father was scotched by my shame of our shabby shop, my father's untidiness, and my mother's loquacity. Nor did I know whether she was seeking him out as Mr. Brock did, because he was educated, or if she was going to him on business, to have him half-sole her Ground Grippers. If her intention were the latter, now, at this very moment, I must relinquish my ambition to be her young and well beloved friend.

The letter to her niece was gone from the writing desk and in its place was one addressed to herself and postmarked London. I was less moved by the foreign stamp and the strange, thin paper of the

envelope than I was by what next caught my eye: it was my own name, Marburg, written on a memorandum pad together with the legends: "Call Breckenridge at three" and "flue in the upstairs sitting room." That meant, then, that there was also a *downstairs* sitting room so that the house was surely big enough to accommodate me as well as Hopestill Mather and Miss Pride. Perhaps even now she was saying to my father that although she realized he was a good man and well educated, she believed he owed it to me to give me a better home which she herself was willing to provide.

While I was meditating, I was interrupted by Mrs. McKenzie. She took very short naps and I heard her suffocated scream. I was afraid she might sense my presence in the room next to hers and summon me to eat a lemon drop or send me to the village to fetch her a bottle of Moxie. I tiptoed out of the room and through the Hotel and then stood in the back yard hesitating. For I could not decide whether to go directly home and present myself in the shop where the interview would probably take place—unless my mother's curiosity were aroused at the sight of the black car and she insisted that they sit in the kitchen—or to go down to the Point and wait there until it should be over, passing the time in watching the sailboats and the barges going out from Boston harbor. But as I debated, I saw two old ladies round the corner of the Hotel with walking sticks and parasols, and I heard one of them say, "It's not far. The view is gorgeous and at this time of day, we'll have the whole Point to ourselves."

In order that my mother might not intercept me, I took the road on the bay side of the peninsula, approaching the shop from the rear. I stood on tiptoe outside the window and I saw, enveloped in the shadows, Miss Pride seated primly on a stool beside the wheels and shoe stands, while my father knelt, taking the measurements of her right foot. This foot, short and narrow, wore a tan silk stocking with heavy cotton reinforcements at the toe and heel, and I was momentarily shocked at the sight, for I had assumed that every article of her clothing, down to her underwear, would be black.

"I understand that you are a friend of one of my fellow-lodgers, Mr. Brock," she was saying.

"He comes sometimes. He is a scholar, I suppose."

Miss Pride smiled. They were both silent as he removed her other shoe and began to measure the left foot. I wondered what she thought of this large shaggy man who always looked unkempt and would have even if he had fastidiously groomed himself. He was the opposite, in this respect, of my mother who never looked dirty or untidy

though she was both, and to a far greater degree than he. He was a tall man and the muscles of his youth had not yet been overlaid by flesh, but, at thirty-three, had begun to sag a little as though they were preparing themselves for a permanent relaxation. His thick, yellow hair looked like a palm thatch and now, as he bent over and it fell forward from his skull, I felt that I could lift up a flap of it and clip it at a single root like the midrib of a leaf. His face was broad and red and its hollows were scooped out cleanly so that, although it was full, the shape of the skeleton was clearly visible. His chin was cleft and his lips, whose usual attitude was one of curving downward, were quiet and contemplative and seemed not to belong to the chilled blue eyes which were those of a decisive man. Today, because of the heat, he was dressed like a boy and when he stood up to get something from the work-table which required him to turn in my direction, I saw to my embarrassment that his white, short-sleeved shirt was torn at the shoulder, revealing a segment of skin, browned by the sun on the days he had gone bathing. His hair seemed fairer than usual and at the temples it was almost white.

Miss Pride, who had been leaning over his bent back, withdrew as he stood up, and she said, "I expect a good pair of shoes, Mr. Marburg. Your price is steep, but I have every confidence in German workmanship."

He did not rise to her compliment but gave only the smile which politeness demanded. I fairly danced with impatience in the sand at his unresponsive face and at the impudence which had made him charge her a high price when he should, I thought, have done the work free and presented her as a gift the finest pair of shoes he could make. Ah, if she had come to call on *me*, not my father, how I would have entertained her! I would have made her a pot of tea and run to the village for a lemon and half a dozen jellied doughnuts. And I would have listened carefully to every word she said and nodded my head in constant agreement as she talked.

Although she saw that he was disinclined to talk (he could so easily, with the opening she had given him, explain that he had not always been a poor, shabby man, but that in Germany, he had been of a well-to-do family), she persevered. "You learned your trade in Germany, did you not?"

"Oh, yes!" In his voice, there was an impulsive note which, combined with my sudden apprehension of a half-empty whiskey bottle on the shelf over the door, alarmed me, and I was afraid that he might begin to calendar, not the events of his past life, but its errors. For when he had been drinking, he became neither rebellious nor

self-pitying as did my mother, but he brooded, morosely accusing himself of heartless infidelities to the traditions of the Catholic church, of his family, and of his country. My mother believed herself to be persecuted by everyone she had ever known—with the exception of Luibka, myself, and a few neighbor women—but he knew, and was powerless to rectify the fault, that all his torture came from his own flabby will which swung him like a pendulum between apathy and fretful indecision. I could see through the clouded windowpane that he was preoccupied with some tangential thought as he wrote down the specifications of Miss Pride's feet in his notebook, and I was in mortal terror that he was going to tell her how long it had been since his last confession. When he did speak again, it was not in self-accusation, but it was from a point far removed from her question.

He said, "But even so, they don't know good shoes from bad here."

"If by 'here' you mean Chichester," returned Miss Pride, "I'm certain you're right. And while they might know skill when they saw it, these poor fishermen could not pay for it. But I beg to differ with you if by 'here' you mean something larger. Don't you think, Mr. Marburg, that in Boston, *we* know the real thing?"

The light which flickered in my father's face was quickly extinguished. "It's too late for *that*," he said.

"You are an obdurate man, sir. My father used to liken your countrymen to our own Puritans. Therein, he said, lay the greatness of the nation. I must confess Papa and I never saw eye to eye on your 'greatness' for even as a young lady, I was displeased with your romancing and your 'earth-spirit' but I can see that some of you are hard-headed. If you were not, how could you work so cleverly?" She paused, watching my father closely as though she were waiting for a reply or a confirmation, but neither was forthcoming. She went on. "If you came to Boston, you would be out of the doldrums. I recollect the governess to the child of one of my friends. When she came, poor *Fräulein* Ströck, she was timorous and wistful, for she had been for some time in an establishment in the middle west where her gifts—a little too Prussian for my liking—were not appreciated in the least. But she had not been with us, with Boston, that is, for a month before she had blossomed into what she had been born to be, a first-rate disciplinarian. I believe you will find we have our feet on the ground and that we need no divining rods to find our treasures."

My father, no more than I, did not know what to make of her lecture. Had I been inside with them, I would have inquired how

many children were under Miss Ströck's charge or why it was that she was too Prussian to please Miss Pride entirely. My disappointment in my father's indifference and in the gesture he made of passing his hand before his face as if he were befogged, was converted into anger as I realized that he did not intend to make any sort of comment at all. Surely he, a grown-up man with an education so proudly advertised by Mr. Brock, could select something out of that subtle speech as a point of departure! How stupid and contrary of him not to ask, at least, if Miss Pride had ever been to Germany. Why, I, a little girl, could do that much!

But Miss Pride, to my astonishment, did not appear annoyed. With a grace which obviated the need for a transition, she said, "If I am pleased with my shoes, I shall put you in the way of further commissions. Surely you won't refuse."

"No," he said, but with neither gratitude nor excitement in his voice. "If I am nothing else, I am a workman who does his work."

She stood up. "Now when the shoes are finished, you may mail them to me at this address." Taking a leather case from her handbag, she extracted a card from it. "I must say there is something about your shop I like. It strikes me as what I spoke of before: the real thing. Nothing is so close to my heart as that, sir: the real thing. And if you had known my father, you would see I came by my passion honestly."

"I hope you will be satisfied with the shoes," said my father. "But you must not expect too much. My hands are not as clever as they used to be. I am no more a shoemaker, I am a shoe-fixer."

Miss Pride gave him her hand. "It's time you changed. Good-by."

He stood stupidly in the center of the room and did not open the door for her, did not, indeed, bid her good-by. When she had gone and the motor of her car started up, he sat down on the stool she had just occupied and putting his hands over his face, the fingers so tightly interlocked that their knuckles whitened, he groaned with some profound, enigmatic misery, and I stepped softly away from the window, perplexed that she who could cause me only happiness had caused him only pain. As I went toward the house, I was gradually infected by his terrible sorrow and felt my face grow feverish, recalling his words last night: the child should never have been born.

In the kitchen, I ran my fingers over the cold stove. My mother was sitting in a chair beside the sink and she drew me down to kiss me. "Who do you love, little Sonie girl?" she said, gazing at me with her great black eyes. And while I answered her as she desired me to, my mind was telling me the truth: "Miss Pride, not you, Mamma."

The Intelligentsia

ARTHUR KOESTLER

1 'INTELLIGENTSIA' is one of those terms difficult to define, but easy to associate. It is logically blurred but emotionally vivid, surrounded with a halo, or rather several halos which overlap and vary according to period and place. One may list as examples the romantic salon; the professional middle classes; terroristic organizations of students and aristocracy in the second half of nineteenth-century Russia; patriotic University Corps in post-Napoleonic Germany; the Bohemians of Montmartre, and so on. There are also evocative geographical names like Bloomsbury, Montparnasse, and Cagnes; and certain typical attitudes to life including clothing, hair-fashion, drink and food. The aura of the intelligentsia changes all the time; its temporary representatives are subdivided into classes and groups, and even its limits are blurred by a host of camp followers and hangers-on: members of the aristocracy, maecenases, tarts, fools, admirers and Earnest Young Men. Hence we won't get far with impressionistic judgements, and had better look up the Oxford dictionary for a solid definition.

There we find:

'Intelligentzia, -sia, The part of a nation (esp. the Russian) that aspires to independent thinking.'

Thus the Concise Oxford Dictionary, 3rd edition, 1934.

By 1936, in the climate of the pink decade and the popular front, the definition has undergone a significant change:

'The class consisting of the educated portion of the population regarded as capable of forming public opinion.'

(The Shorter Oxford Dictionary, 2nd edition, 1936).

This second version has since obviously been proved too optimistic, and we had better fall back on the first which is excellent. Historically, it is indeed the 'aspiration to independent thinking' which provides the only valid group-characteristic of the intelligentsia.

But how does it happen that an 'aspiration towards independent thinking' arises in a part of a nation? In our class-ridden world this is obviously not a matter of a spontaneous association of the

gifted—enlightened dukes, plus miners' sons plus General Practitioners. The intelligentsia of a given period and place is of a fairly homogeneous social texture: loose threads only appear on the fringes. Intelligence alone is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition to become a member of the Intelligentsia. Instead, we have to regard the formation of this particular group as a social process which, as far as modern society is concerned, begins with the French Revolution.

II

THE INTELLIGENTSIA AND THE THIRD ESTATE

Among the upper strata of the Third Estate the aspiration to independent thinking was not a luxury but a dire necessity of survival. The young bourgeoisie, hemmed in by the stultifying feudal structure had to conquer its historic lebensraum, and this conquest was only possible by blowing up the feudal totems and taboos with the dynamite of 'independent thought.' The first modern intellectuals were the Encyclopædists, and they enter the historical stage as the great debunkers and iconoclasts. Goethe resurrected is unimaginable in our time, but Voltaire would be within a fortnight acclimatized in Bloomsbury, winning all weekend competitions of the *New Statesman*. For Goethe was the last Renaissance genius, a direct descendant of Leonardo, and his attitude to Society that of a courtier of some enlightened Florentine prince; whereas with Voltaire, the great debunking of feudal values begins.

The intelligentsia in the modern sense thus first appears as that part of a nation which by its social situation not so much 'aspires' but is *driven* to independent thought, that is to a type of group behaviour which debunks the existing hierarchy of values (from which it is excluded) and at the same time tries to replace it with new values of its own. This constructive tendency of the intelligentsia is its second basic feature. The true iconoclasts always had a prophetic streak, and all debunkers have a bashfully hidden pedagogic vein.

But where had these new values of their own come from? This is the point where Marxist analysis ends in over-simplified schemata:

'The bourgeoisie, historically, has played a most revolutionary part . . . Constant revolutionizing of production, uninterrupted disturbance of all social conditions, everlasting uncertainty and agitation distinguish the bourgeois epoch from all earlier ones. All fixed, fast-frozen, relations, with their train of ancient and venerable prejudices and opinions, are swept away, all new-formed ones become antiquated before they can ossify. All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy

is profaned, and man is at last compelled to face with sober senses his real conditions of life and his relations with his kind. . . .

And as in material, so also in intellectual production. The intellectual creations of individual nations become common property. National one-sidedness and narrow-mindedness become more and more impossible, and from the numerous national and local literatures there arises a world literature.'

(Manifesto of the Communist Party. 1848).

The first paragraph quoted shows Marx and Engels at their best; in the second they take the fatal short cut from Economy to "Superstructure": that is culture, art, mass psychology. Marxian society has a basement—production, and an attic—intellectual production; the staircase and the lifts are missing.

For it is not as simple as that: the triumphant class creating its own philosophic superstructure to fit its mode of production like a tailored suit. The Encyclopædia was not commissioned by the National Assembly. Whenever a class or group emerged victorious from its struggles, it found the befitting ideology already waiting for it like a ready made suit in a department store. Thus Marx found Hegel, Feuerbach, and Ricardo, Mussolini had only to pick Sorel and Pareto, Hitler discovered Gobineau, Houston Stuart Chamberlain and Jung; Stalin revived Machiavelli and Peter the Great. This of course, is a mixed bag of examples of progressive and regressive movements which, strictly speaking, should be kept apart. For regressive movements need simply to fall back on superannuated values—not on the last, but on the last-but-one or last-but-two, to perform a romantic revival, and derive a lot of pseudo-revolutionary gusto out of this 'revolution à rebours.' And there is always a part of the intelligentsia which, abandoning its aspiration to independent thought and detaching itself from the main body, lends itself to such romantic revivals. They are the tired and the cynics, the hedonists, the romantic capitulators, who transform their dynamite into Bengal lights, the Juengers, Montherlants, Ezra Pounds.

Discarding these, there still remains the problem of how and why the true, emergent, progressive movements in history, those which led to the Rights of Man and to the founding of the First Workers International, those who have no last-but-one precepts to fall back on, invariably find the right ideology waiting for them as the right moment. I repeat that I do not believe any more that the economic process by itself creates its own superstructure. Orthodox Marxism has never produced the historical evidence for this postulate. Nor, of course, is it a matter of coincidence. It seems rather that political

economy and cultural development are merely two aspects of the same basic process, which we are as yet far from being able to define.

Two examples from other spheres may help to bring this vague sounding assertion into relief. The first is the old mind-body problem where the antithesis between materialistic and idealistic schools was much the same as between historical materialism and historical idealism, until the double-aspect theory brought the quarrel about which is the cause and which the effect, which is the hen and which is the egg, to an at least temporary close. Thus your gastric acid is neither the cause nor the effect of your nervous state, but both are aspects, consequences of your total mode of living. The second example is the relation between physics and mathematics. When Einstein was faced with the contradictory evidence of two perfectly sound physical experiments (Michelson-Morley and Fizeau) he was able to develop the theory of Relativity only because the apparently abstract and useless non-Euclidian mathematical fantasies of Bolyai, Riemann and others were waiting for him just at the right moment, ready-made around the corner. The mathematical and the physical elements of Relativity were developed quite independently, and their coincidence would appear miraculous, without the recognition of a fundamental trend of evolution in scientific thought, of which the various faculties are merely isolated aspects.

The rise of the Third Estate and of the progressive middle classes was thus neither the cause nor the effect of humanistic liberal philosophy. The two phenomena sprang from the same root, they were entwined and correlated like colour and shape in the same object. *The basic function of the Encyclopaedists and of all later intelligentsias was this correlating of social and intellectual evolution; they were the self-interpreting, introspective organs of the social body; and this function automatically includes both the iconoclastic and the pedagogic, the destructive and the constructive element.*

III

THE DECAY OF THE THIRD ESTATE

This function gives a clue to the always peculiar structure of the intelligentsia.

Social behaviour has a much greater inertia than thought. There is always an enormous discrepancy between our collective ways of living and the accumulated data of science, art, technique. We wage wars, go to church, worship kings, eat murderous diets, conform to sexual taboos, make neurotics of our children, miseries of our marriages, oppress and let ourselves be oppressed—whereas in our text-

books and art galleries there is embodied the objective knowledge of a way of living which we shall only put into practice in decades or centuries. In everyday life we all behave like creatures in a period piece, anachronistic caricatures of ourselves. The distance between the library and the bedroom is astronomical. However, the body of theoretical knowledge and independent thought is there, only waiting to be picked up, as the Jacobins picked up the Encyclopaedists.

This picking up, however, is the function of a special type of people; the liaison agents between the way we live and the way we *could* live according to the contemporary level of objective knowledge. Those who are snugly tucked into the social hierarchy have obviously no strong impulse towards independent thought. Where should it come from? They have no reason to destroy their accepted values nor any desires to build new ones. The thirst for knowledge is mainly confined to situations where the unknown is disquieting; the happy are rarely curious. On the other hand the great majority of the oppressed, the underdogs, lack the opportunity or the objectivity or both, for the pursuit of independent thought. They accept or reject the existing values; both attitudes are inarticulate and unobjective. Thus the function of co-ordination between the two concepts Homo and Sapiens falls to those sandwiched in between two layers, and exposed to the pressure of both. The intelligentsia is a kind of sensitive, porous membrane stretched between media of different properties.

One should not however confound them with the middle classes as such. Sensitivity, searching and groping are attitudes which presuppose a certain amount of frustration—not too much and not too little; a kind of moderate unhappiness, a harmonious disequilibrium. The upper strata which accept the traditional values, lack this frustration; the bottom strata have too much of it—to the degree of being either paralysed or discharging it in convulsive fits. Further, it must be a *specific* frustration—the discontent of the professional man, writer, artist, who rebel not because society has deprived them of every chance, crushed and buried them in pit or workshop, but because they have been given a margin large enough to develop their gifts, but too narrow to make them feel smug and accept the given order of things. For the smug, thinking is a luxury, for the frustrated a necessity. And as long as the chasm between thought and tradition, theoretical insight and practical routine prevails, thinking must necessarily be directed by the two poles of debunking and Utopianism.

All this does not apply any more to the bulk of the middle class. It did as long as their climate was 'Commonwealth' and Jacobinism.

Meanwhile the once revolutionary urban bourgeoisie has become a conservative force. No more a sensitive membrane, but an inert sticky glue which holds the social body together. Their frustrations are repressed, their aspirations are not towards new hierarchies of values, but towards climbing to the top of the existing hierarchy. Thus the intelligentsia, once the vanguard of the ascending bourgeoisie, becomes the Lumpen-Bourgeoisie in the age of its decay.

IV

THE INTELLIGENTSIA AND THE FOURTH ESTATE

As the Third Estate gradually loses its progressive character to become first stagnant then regressive, the intelligentsia becomes more and more detached from it and driven to the quest for more vigorous allies, capable of fulfilling its task of demolition and construction.

The most fascinating example for this quest is nineteenth-century Russia. ' . . . Whether they (the revolutionary intelligentsia) spoke of the necessity of political liberty, of the plight of the peasant or of the socialist future of society, it was always their own plight which really moved them. And their plight was not primarily due to material need: it was spiritual.' (Borkenau, 'The Communist International').

This spiritual plight of the Russian intelligentsia was yet another form of the duality I mentioned: the contradiction between the inert, stagnant, habit-conditioned form of everyday life on the one hand, and the accumulated data of objective knowledge lying fallow as 'theory' and 'ideology' on the other. For the nineteenth-century Russians this latter principle was embodied in Western European civilization: in British Parliamentaryism, French literature, German philosophy. For them, the Western was the incarnation of homo sapiens as opposed to the Barbarians of the steppes; just as, by an ironical turn of history, the Western intelligentsia of the two post-war decades became spell-bound by Russian Communism which seemed to incorporate the truly human Utopia, as opposed to the decay of Capitalism.

There is, however, a fundamental difference between the early Russian revolutionary intelligentsia—the Shelyabows, Sonja Petrovskajas, Bakunins, Nechaews, Kropotkins, and the Bloomsbury of the Pink Decade. It is easy to sneer at the comparison and to contrast the futility of the latter with the heroism of the assassins of Alexander II, the martyrdom of the Siberian exiles and the prisoners of Schluesselburg. Racial comparisons between the undeniably greater endurance and fatalism of the semi-asiatic Russians and the highly strung Westerners provide one differential factor, but not the basic

one. The basic point is that people grow under the burden of their responsibilities and shrink if the burden is taken from them. Nechaev lived for a number of years chained to the wall of a humid cell and when his comrades succeeded in establishing contact and offered to liberate him, refused because he preferred them to concentrate on more important tasks. But later, in the emigré atmosphere of Geneva, he became involved in the most squalid quarrels and died an obscure nobody. The venerable and justly venerated Russian student heroines and martyrs were not less hysterical than any character of Huxley's or Evelyn Waugh's; Lassalle was a snob who got himself killed in a quixotic duel, Marx a pathologically quarrelsome old sponger, Bakunin had an incestuous fixation to a sister, was impotent and died a virgin; Trotsky at a certain period spent all his afternoons and evenings playing chess in the Café Central in Vienna—a typical figure from an Osbert Lancaster Café Royal Landscape; Lenin suffered a traumatic shock when his brother Alexander was hanged—hence his fanatical hatred of the Bourgeoisie of which, in analytical terms, the Russian revolution was merely a 'projection'. Neurosis is inherent in the structure of intelligentsias (I shall come back to this point in a moment): history, however, is not interested in a person's motives, only in his achievements. But why is it that the burden and bliss of responsibility is given to the intelligentsia in certain periods and in others not, condemning the latter to barrenness and futility? This is the question to which the comparison between the early Russians and Bloomsbury boils down; more precisely to the question of the historical constellation which accounts for the sharing-out of responsibilities.

The answer becomes at once obvious by a comparison of the two countries' sociological structure. Nineteenth-century Russia had no Trade Unions, no Labor movement or Co-operatives. Serfdom was only abolished in 1862; in that drowsy, inert giant-country there was no gradual transition from patriarchal feudalism to modern Capitalism; I have spoken to peasants who took aeroplanes for granted, watching them each day fly over their heads but had never seen a railway or motor-car; others who had travelled in a car but wouldn't believe that such a thing as a bicycle existed.

What a paradise for intellectuals with pedagogical yearnings! When the first of them, the martyrs of Narodnaya Volya, started what they called 'going among the people' dressed as peasants, preaching the new gospel, they trod on virgin soil, they found no competition in the shape of Trade Unions and Labor politicians telling them to cast off their masquerade and go back to the Bloomsbury of Petro-

grad or Moscow. The mushik proved apathetic and did not respond to their appeal; but the crusading intelligentsia was not discouraged because they had no rivals; they changed their tactics from mass-appeal to terrorism, from terrorism to work among the industrial proletariat, the landless peasants, among the soldiers. They quarrelled, they split, they ramified; but all the time they could work in the untouched raw material of History, could project their spiritual plight, their desire to destroy and rebuild on to a gigantic historical plane. Their faith moved rocks because there still were unhewn rocks to move.

In contrast to them, the Western intelligentsia found no virgin fields to plough, no natural allies to realize their aspirations to independent thought. According to Marxist theory the intelligentsia was to join the ranks of the working class and to become their strategists and tacticians. There is no evidence that the intelligentsia lacked the courage or the ability to do so. In 1848 students and workers fought together on the barricades; in the French Commune and in the revolutionary movements after the last war in Germany, Austria, Hungary, Bulgaria, and even in the International Brigades of Spain, they gave an excellent account of themselves. But from the middle of the nineteenth century onward, the workers of Central and Western Europe had rapidly developed their own organizations, parties, trade unions, produced their own leaders and, above all, their own bureaucracy—men with iron wills and wooden heads. In an age of accelerated developments, the organized Fourth Estate had become stagnant much quicker than the Third in its time, and without even ascending to power. The crumbs of material improvements and the shadow of political influence which various Sections of the Second International had wrung from the rulers, were enough to paralyse their impetus. Members of the Western Intelligentsia could become Labor members of Parliaments, editors of Left papers, lecturers in dreary evening classes; but there were no rocks to move with the lever of 'independent thought.' Towards the end of the century the Western intelligentsia had only the choice to be either bourgeois decadents or proletarian schoolmasters. Their groups and cliques developed according to these alternative poles, with a spectrum ranging from the French Symbolists through the 'George-Kreis' to the Fabians. Compare Shaw with Voltaire, Leon Blum with St. Just, and you get the difference—not so much in stature as in historical opportunity.

The shake-up of the First World War seemed to create a new opportunity for a general debunking and rebuilding. The whole body of ideas had undergone a radical transformation: Relativity and

Quantum mechanics, Hormonology and Psycho-analysis, Leninism and Behaviourism, Aviation and Wireless, Expressionism and Surrealism—a completely new universe had taken shape in the library; and the dazzling light it radiated drove the intelligentsia half crazy by its contrast to the anachronistic, dusty-musty traditions still governing everyday conduct and beliefs. What a historical opportunity for de-bunking and re-building; but where were the allies to carry it out? The sensitive membrane vibrated wildly; but there was no resonance-body attached to it. Utopian striving during those two decades was monopolized by the Third International, whose blueprint for the European revolution was shaped on the conditions of a country with 80 per cent illiterates and a ratio of rural to urban population of ten to one. During the two decades of its existence the revolutionary movement was focussed on and governed by that semi-asiatic dictatorship. Its European extension needed not intellectuals, but a ruthless and uncritically obedient bureaucracy. The few members of the Western intelligentsia who were accepted into its ranks lost first the right, and soon even the desire for 'independent thought'; they became fanatic sectarians and Party-hacks, while the best among them met a tragic end. Particularly tragic was the fate of the revolutionary intelligentsia in the country where revolution seemed almost within reach, Germany. Liebknecht and Luxembourg were murdered in '18, Paul Levy committed suicide after his expulsion from the C.P., Ruth Fischer, also expelled, vanished into obscurity, Toller hanged himself in New York, Muehsam committed suicide in a Nazi concentration camp, Max Hoelz was drowned under dubious circumstances in Russia, Heinz Neumann, the last surviving C.P. leader who came from the intelligentsia was liquidated.

But the bulk of the Western intelligentsia were never admitted to this bloody Olympus. They were not wanted, had to remain fellow-travellers, the fifth wheel to the cart. The intelligentsia of the Pink Decade was irresponsible, because it was deprived of the privilege of responsibility. Left in the cold, suspended in a vacuum, they became decadents of the bourgeoisie. It was nobody's fault; for they were the mirror, not the light.

I am neither trying to whitewash, nor to accuse. The intelligentsia is part of the social body, its most sensitive part; when the body is ill, the skin develops a rash. The deterioration of the intelligentsia is as much a symptom of disease as the corruption of the ruling class or the sleeping sickness of the proletariat. They are symptoms of the same fundamental process. To sneer at the intelligentsia and, while depriving it of the responsibility of action, shove on to it the respon-

sibility of failure, is either thoughtless stupidity or a manoeuvre with obvious motives. Nazism knew exactly what it was doing when it exterminated the intelligentsia of the European Continent.

V

THE INTELLIGENTSIA AND NEUROSIS

This sensitive membrane not only stretches between heterogeneous social classes, but between the social body as a whole and its environment. It is tempting, and perhaps not entirely futile, to follow up this metaphor for a while. It is the surface, the ectoderm, phylogenetically the rind of the plasmatic bubble, which provides the tissues for the nerves, the spinal cord and the brain in the embryo. The central nervous system is derived not, as one would expect, from the inside, the sheltered parts, the core; but from the exposed surface, permanently submitted to the bombardment of external stimuli, to irritation and excitement, some lust and much pain. Under the influence of this permanent buzzing shower-bath of stimuli the surface-tissue gradually loses its obtuseness and undergoes that strange transformation, that 'burning-through' process which finally gives rise to the elusive, first faint glow of consciousness. The grey matter of the brain-rind was originally skin-tissue, exposed and brow-beaten, transformed by a unique organic metamorphosis. Even Freud, that giant of profanity, became almost lyrical where (in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*) he dealt with this aspect of the biology of the mind.

However, man developed a skull, in which his precious grey matter is safely packed like caviar in a box. No such casing is provided by society for its nervous tissues. They are rather treated like corns on the toes, a nuisance permanently trampled on and permanently hitting back with mean little stabs.

To return from metaphor to fact: the relation between intelligentsia and neurosis is not accidental, but functional. To think and behave independently puts one automatically into opposition against the majority whose thinking and behaviour is dependent on traditional patterns: and to belong to a minority is in itself a neurosis-forming situation. From the nonconformist to the crank there is only one step; and the hostile pressure of society provides the push.

When a man in a concert hall coughs, everybody will cough, and one feels the physical itching in one's throat. Group-mimicry is a real force; to resist it means getting out of tune with one's social environment, creates neurotic tensions and feelings of guilt. One might in theory be a thousand times in the right, and yet feel guilty for butting against the accepted wrong, sanctioned by a tradition

whose roots have sprouted in one's own unconscious self. To quarrel with society means to quarrel with its projections in one's self, and produces the classical neurotic split patterns. Oedipus situation and inferiority complex, timidity and arrogance, over-compensation and introversion are merely descriptive metaphors for deformations which spring from basically the same root. An intelligentsia deprived of the prop of an alliance with an ascending class must turn against itself and develop that hot-house atmosphere, that climate of intellectual masturbation and incest, which characterized it during the last decade.

And it must further develop that morbid attraction for the pseudo-intellectual hangers-on whose primary motive is not the 'aspiration to independent thought' but neurosis pure and simple, and who crowd around the hot-house because the world outside is too cold for them. They infiltrate, and gradually outnumber the legitimate inhabitants, adding to their disrepute, until, in periods of decadence, the camp-followers gradually swallow up the army. It is a sad transformation when social protest dissolves into a-social morbidity.

But even for the 'real' intelligentsia, neurosis is an almost inevitable correlate. Take sex for example. On the one hand we know all about the anachronistic nature of our sex-regulating institutions, their thwarting influence and the constant barrage of unhappiness they shower on society. On the other hand, individual experiments of 'free companionship', marriages with mutual freedom, etc. etc., all end in pitiful failure; the very term of 'free love' has already an embarrassingly Edwardian taint. Reasonable arrangements in an unreasonable society cannot succeed. The pressure of the environment (both from outside and from inside our conditioned selves) is enormous; under its distorting influence the natural becomes cramped, even in writing. You feel it even in such accomplished craftsmen as D. H. Lawrence and Hemingway. You hear, when the critical situation approaches, the author saying to himself: 'Damn it, it is an act of nature and I am going to put it as easily and naturally as if the two of them were having a meal.' And then you watch him, the author, putting his sleeves up and setting himself to the task; sweat pours down his brow, his eyes pop out of his head, the nib of his pen breaks under the pressure of his desperate efforts to be 'easy and natural about it'. The trouble is, of course, that while he writes, his environment (i.e. the potential readers) have closed in around him; he feels their stare and breathless expectancy, and feels paralysed by it. Hence the cramped dialect of Lady Chatterley's lover and that preposterous rabbit in the bag for which no bell would ever toll, in an otherwise masterly novel.

The pressure of the environment cramps art as it cramps behaviour. One may challenge this environment, but one has to pay for it, and the price is neurotic guilt. There never was an intelligentsia without a guilt-complex; it is the income tax one has to pay for wanting to make others richer. An armament manufacturer may have a perfectly clean conscience; but I have never met a pacifist without a guilty look in his eyes.

Those who attack the intelligentsia for its neurotic dispositions might as well attack the miners for their susceptibility to T.B. It is a professional disease and should be recognized as such, without scorn or shame.

VI

THE INTELLIGENTSIA AND THE FUTURE

The old, liberal and socialist intelligentsia of the Continent is no more; though we still fail to realize how thoroughly Nazism implemented its poet laureate's programme 'When I hear the word culture I fire my pistol.' A new intelligentsia may be growing underground, a new seed beneath the snow; but in spite of newspaper articles, intelligence-digests, radio, etc., we know at present as little about the mental climate of the people beyond the Channel, about how the past, present and future looks, smells, tastes to them, as we know about the planet Mars. Samples of literature which reach us from France do not seem to me very encouraging; but then, I am perhaps prejudiced against what I believe to be the growing French intellectual predilection for melodious bombast. Yet in Italy and the Balkans, in Austria and Norway, a process might already have started which one day will come into the open as a brand-new movement, a fresh attitude to life which will make all of us appear like old Victorian dodderers; and any of us who earn a patronizing pat will have got all the credit which historically they deserve.

This is all speculation; it is easier to prophesy in terms of decades than in terms of years. One may have some ideas as to the historical curve along which we move; but the oscillations and ripples of the curve are completely unpredictable. If, in the long run, Burnham's diagnosis comes to be true (as I believe it well may), and if, after some intermediary oscillations, we are in for an era of managerial super-states, the intelligentsia is bound to become a special sector in the Civil Service. This is less farfetched and fantastic than it sounds; in Russia during the past twenty years this state of affairs has been realized to a very large extent, and Germany during the last ten years was on the way to imitate it. Russian publishing houses, theatres,

building trusts, research laboratories, universities and medical services are all owned by the State; the author, actor, architect, scientist, etc., is in fact a civil servant, though the atmosphere is not exactly that of Whitehall. But even the literary movements in Russia—'Revolutionary Romanticism', 'Socialist Realism', 'Operative Literature', 'New Patriotism' have not spontaneously, organically grown, but were decreed at Party-Congresses and by utterances of government spokesmen; and the same applies, in varying degree, to poetry, drama, architecture, films, not to mention historical research and philosophy. The successive philosophical and artistic movements in the Soviet State look as if they were performed to the pattern 'Left turn—Right turn—As you were.' In the German Reichskulturkammern the transformation of Parnassus into a barrack-square was equally thorough.

In the Anglo-Saxon countries a similar development is difficult, but not altogether impossible to visualize. Above all, a number of different roads may lead to the same goal. Total mobilization during the present war was a kind of dress-rehearsal for the Western version of the bureaucratized state, and during the last two years the intelligentsia has to a large extent been absorbed as temporary civil servants in the M. of I., as P.R.O.s, in the B.B.C., etc. For the time being 'job' and 'private production' are still kept in separate compartments (with the result of the latter becoming more and more atrophied); but it is imaginable that a situation may arise in which the two merge; when, instead of regarding the former as a kind of patriotic hacking and the latter as the real thing, the energies become suddenly canalized into one stream. A few may start the new mode, and the rest follow suit; the individuals concerned may believe that they are following a personal impulse, whereas in reality it would be a process of adaptation to the changed social situation of the managerial state. The danger of this happening is all the greater as conformism is often a form of betrayal which can be carried out with a perfectly clear conscience; and the temptation to exchange the miseries which intellectual honesty entails for the heart-warming satisfactions of managerial efficiency is great. The collapse of the revolutionary movement has put the intelligentsia into a defensive position; the alternative for the next few years is no more 'capitalism or revolution' but to save *some* of the values of democracy and humanism or to lose them all; and to prevent this happening one has to cling more than ever to the ragged banner of 'independent thinking'.

It is, at present, a very popular banner; and unique in this respect, that on its cloth the spittle of derision has clotted together with the blood of our dead.

London Letter

SPRING IS HERE, a late spring after a mild winter, and there is universal expectation that "It" (I don't have to tell you what "It" is) will begin some time next month. The streets swarm with American troops. In the expensive quarters of the town British soldiers, who are not allowed to spend their leave in London unless they have their homes there, are hardly to be seen. The air raids began to hot up about the beginning of February and there have been one or two biggish ones—nothing like 1940 but still very trying because of the deafening noise of the ack-ack. On the other hand, the scenic effects are terrific. The orange-colored flares dropped by the German planes drift slowly down, making everything almost as light as day, and carmine-colored tracer shells sail up to meet them: and as the flares get lower the shadows on the window pane move slowly upwards. The food situation is as always. I am ashamed to say that only very recently I had my first meal in a British restaurant and was amazed to find that food quite good and very cheap. (These places are run by the public authorities on a non-profit basis.) Various kinds of manufactured goods are now almost unprocurable. It is almost impossible to buy a watch or clock, new or secondhand. A typewriter which before the war would have cost twelve pounds now costs at least thirty pounds secondhand, supposing that you can get hold of one at all. Cars are scarcer than ever on the roads. On the other hand the bourgeoisie are coming more and more out of their holes, as one can see by the advertisements for servants quite in the old style, e.g., this one from the *Times*: "Countess of Shrewsbury requires experienced Head Housemaid of three." There were several years during which one did not see advertisements of that kind. Evening dress (for men) is said to be reappearing though I haven't seen anyone wearing it yet.

There isn't a great deal of political news. Churchill, if one can judge by his voice, is aging a good deal but grows more and more intolerant of opposition. It is assumed on all sides that if anything should happen to Churchill, Eden will automatically become PM. Those who know Eden say he is such a weakling that the right-wing Tories would find it more convenient to keep him in office as a figurehead than to put in a strong man after their own hearts. The Labor Party has sunk a few feet deeper in everyone's estimation after the vote of confidence business—the government were out-voted on a minor issue, Churchill told the Members to take their votes back, and nearly everyone did so. Common Wealth is still making some headway but constantly rumbles with inter-

nal dissensions which I can't get the hang of. It came out recently that up to date, three-fifths of its expenses have been paid by Acland (who has now come to the end of his money) and a rather doubtful person named Alan Good, a wealthy business man (light industries) who has been in the party since almost the beginning. The Communists have been taking a slightly more anti-government line and on one occasion have supported an opposition candidate at a by-election.

The big event of the last few months has been the large-scale coal strikes, which are the culmination of a long period during which coal production has been behind schedule and—coming on the eve of the Second Front—obviously indicate very serious grievances. The immediate trouble is over money, but the root cause is the unbearable conditions in the British mines, which naturally seem worse in wartime when unemployment hardly enters into the picture. I don't know a great deal about the technical side of mining, but I have been down a number of mines and I know that the conditions are such that human beings simply will not stand them except under some kind of compulsion. (I described all this years ago in a book called *The Road to Wigan Pier*.) Most of the British mines are very old, and they belong to a multitude of comparatively small owners who often haven't the capital to modernize them even if they wanted to. This means not only that they often lack up-to-date machinery, but that the "travelling" may be almost more exhausting than the work itself. In the older mines it may be more than three miles from the shaft to the coal face (a mile would be a normal distance) and most of the way the galleries will be only four feet high or less. This means that the miner has to do the whole journey bent double, sometimes crawling on all fours, for a hundred yards or so, and then on top of this do his day's work, which may have to be done kneeling down if it is a shallow seam. The exertion is so great that men who come back to work after a long go of unemployment sometimes fall by the wayside, unable even to get as far as the coal face. Added to this there are the ghastly hovels that most of the miners have to live in, built in the worst period of the Industrial Revolution, the general lack of pithead baths, the dullness of the mining towns compared with the newer towns that have sprung up round the light industries, and, of course, very poor wages. In peace times, when the dole is the alternative, people will just put up with this, but now every miner is aware that if he could only get out of the mines (which he isn't allowed to, of course) he could be earning twice the money for easy work in some hygienic factory. It has been found impossible to recruit enough miners and for some time past they have had to be conscripted. This is done by ballot, and it is an index of how mining is regarded that to be drawn as a miner (instead of, say, being put in a submarine) is looked on as a disaster. The conscripted youths, who include public-school boys, have been to the fore in the strikes. On top of all the other causes for discon-

tent, it is said that the coal owners, while reading the miners sermons on patriotism, are doing jiggery-pokery by working uneconomic seams, saving up the good seams for after the war when the demand for coal will have dropped again.

Everyone except the interested minority is aware that these conditions can't be cured without nationalization of the mines, and public opinion is entirely ready for this step. Even the left-wing Tories, though not facing up to nationalization, talk of compelling the coal-owners to amalgamate into larger units. It is, in fact, obvious that without centralizing the industry it would be impossible to raise the enormous sums needed to bring the mines up to date. But nationalization would solve the short-term problem as well, for it would give the miners something to look forward to, and in return they would certainly undertake to refrain from striking for the duration of the war. Needless to say there is no sign of any such thing happening. Instead there has been a hue and cry after the Trotskyists, who are alleged to be responsible for the strikes. Trotskyism, which not one English person in a hundred had heard of before the war, actually got the big headlines for several days. In reality the English Trotskyists only number, I believe, about five hundred, and it is unlikely they have a footing among the full-time miners, who are very suspicious of anyone outside their own community.

As this end of the war approaches its climax, the extraordinary contradictions in the attitude of the intelligentsia become more apparent. Even now large numbers of pinks claim to believe that no Second Front is intended, in spite of the vast American armies that have been brought here. But at the same time as they cry out for the Second Front to be opened immediately they protest against the bombing of Germany and Italy, not merely because of the loss of life but because of the material destruction. I have also heard people say almost in the same breath (a) that we must open a Second Front at once, (b) that it is no longer necessary because the Russians can defeat the Germans singlehanded, and (c) that it is bound to be a failure. Simultaneously with the desire to finish the war quickly there is quite frank rejoicing when something goes wrong, e.g., the stalemate in Italy, and a readiness to believe any rumor without examination so long as it is a rumor of disaster. Almost simultaneously, again, people approve the Russian proposals to partition Germany and exact enormous reparations, and tell you what a lot Hitler has done for Europe and how much preferable he is to the British Tories. Again—I notice this every day in the short stories and poems sent in to the *Tribune*—numbers of left-wingers have a definitely schizophrenic attitude towards war and militarism. What one might call the official left-wing view is that war is a meaningless massacre brought about by capitalists, no war can ever lead to any good result, in battle no one has any thought except to run away, and the soldier is a downtrodden slave

who hates his officer like poison and looks on the enemy soldier as a comrade. But as soon as the Red Army is involved the whole of this conception is turned upside down. Not only does war become glorious and purposeful, but the soldier becomes a happy warrior who positively enjoys military discipline, loves his officer like a dog, hates the enemy like the Devil (a phrase that occurs frequently in these stories that are sent in to me is "his heart was fired with passionate hatred") and utters edifying political slogans while in the act of slinging a hand grenade. There is further schizophrenia on the subject of atrocities: any atrocity story reported by the Russians is true, anything reported by the British or Americans untrue. Ditto with the Asiatic quislings. Wang Ching-wei is a contemptible traitor, Subhas Chandra Bose a heroic liberator. Emotionally, what the Left intelligentsia wish for is that Germany and Japan should be defeated but that Britain and America should not be victorious. Once the Second Front has started it would not surprise me to see them change their attitude, become defeatist about the whole business and disclaim the demands for a Second Front which they have been making for more than two years.

Russophile feeling is on the surface stronger than ever. It is now next door to impossible to get anything overtly anti-Russian printed. Anti-Russian books do appear, but mostly from Catholic publishing firms and always from a religious or frankly reactionary angle. "Trot-skyism," using the word in a wide sense, is even more effectively silenced than in the 1935-39 period. The Stalinists themselves don't seem to have regained their influence in the press, but apart from the general Russophile feeling of the intelligentsia, all the appeasers, e.g., Professor E. H. Carr, have switched their allegiance from Hitler to Stalin. The servility of the so-called intellectuals is astonishing. The *Mission to Moscow* film, which I gather raised something of a storm in the USA, was accepted here with hardly a murmur. It is interesting too that pacifists almost never say anything anti-Russian, though temperamentally they are not always Russophile. Their implied line is that it is wrong for us to defend ourselves by violence, but is all right for the Russians. This is sheer cowardice: they dare not flout prevailing left-wing opinion, which, of course, they are more afraid of than public opinion in the wider sense.

I suspect, however, that Russian and pro-Russian propaganda will in the long run defeat itself simply by being overdone. Lately I have several times been surprised to hear ordinary working-class or middle-class people say, "Oh, I'm fed up with the Russians! They're too good to live," or words to that effect. One must remember that the USSR means different things to the working-class and the Left intelligentsia. The former are Russophile because they feel Russia to be the working-class country where the common man is in control, whereas the intellectuals are influenced at least partly by power-worship. The affection they feel for the USSR is still vaguely bound up with the idea of the meek

inheriting the earth, and the tone of latter-day Soviet propaganda obviously contradicts this. In any case, English people usually react in the end against too-blatant propaganda. A good illustration of this is General Montgomery, idolized a year or two ago and now thoroughly unpopular because over-publicized.*

I don't think I have any more news. You will be interested to hear that several American soldiers have rung me up, introducing themselves as readers of *PR*. These are still the only contacts I have made with American soldiers. The troops and the public, other than girls, are still very stand-offish. I notice that Negroes do not seem to pick up girls so easily as the whites, though everyone says they like the Negroes better. A little while back a young American soldier had rung up and I asked him to stay the night at our flat. He was quite interested and said it was the first time he had been inside an English home. I said, "How long have you been in this country?" and he said, "two months." He went on to tell me that the previous day a girl had come up to him on the pavement and seized hold of his penis with the words, "Hullo Yank!" Yet he had not seen the interior of an ordinary English home. This makes me sad. Even at their best English people are not very hospitable to strangers, but I would like the Americans to know that the cold welcome they have had in this country is partly due to the fact that the rations are not easy to stretch and that after years of war people are ashamed of the shabby interiors of their houses, while the films have taught them to believe or half-believe that every American lives in a palace with a chromium-plated cocktail bar.

I am going to send two copies of this, one air mail and one sea mail, hoping that the latter may get there a bit sooner. The time that letters take to cross the Atlantic nowadays has made some people wonder whether the air mail travels in balloons.

GEORGE ORWELL

* Here is a sample of the kind of story now told about Montgomery. General Eisenhower is having lunch with the King. "How do you get on with Montgomery?" asks the King. "Very well," replies Eisenhower, "except that I have a kind of feeling that he's after my job." "Oh," says the King, "I was afraid he was after mine."

Other similar stories are told of Eisenhower or Montgomery interchangeably. For example:

Three doctors who had just died arrived at the gates of Heaven. The first two, a physician and a surgeon, were refused admittance. The third described himself as a psychiatrist. "Come in!" said St. Peter immediately. "We should like your professional advice. God has been behaving in a very peculiar way lately. He thinks He's General Eisenhower (or Montgomery)."

REJOICE IN THE ABYSS

When the foundations quaked and the pillars shook,
I trembled, and in the dark I felt the fear
Of the photograph my skull might take
Through the eyesockets, in one flashlit instant,
When the crumbling house would obliterate
Every impression of my sunlit life
With one impression of black final horror,
Covering me with irrecoverable doom.

But the pulsation passed, and glass lay round me,
And I arose from the acrid dust, and in the night
I walked through the clattering houses,
A prophet seeking tongues of flame.

Against a background of cloud, I saw
The houses kneel, exposed in their abject
Centennial human prayer: "O fate
Spare us from grief that punishes our neighbours."
And the heads of passers by, looked through,
Revealed the same shameless entreaty.

Then in the icy night, indifferent to our
Sulphurous nether fate, I saw
The dead of all time heaped in one clear tide
Uplifted on the points of stars, above
This town, whose walls of brick and flesh
Are transitory dwellings of the spirit
Which climbs to that enormous tide of death.

The streets then filled with London prophets,
Saints of Covent Garden, Parliament Fields,
The Heath, Lambeth, and Saint Johns' Wood Graveyard,
Who cried in cockney fanatic voices:
"In the midst of loif is death." And they all kneeled
And prayed against the misery manufactured
In factories, the pride of houses,
Ambition of palaces, vain hope of Churches,

And they worshipped children and simple flowers,
And opened slum windows onto angels
Who climbed up all the sooty steeples,
Like steeple jacks, or weeping chimney sweeps.

And they sang: "We souls of the abyss,
Dancing in frozen peace of upper air,
Naively familiar with the stars and angels,
We say: 'Rejoice in the abyss!
For hollow is the centre of the skull,
The rumour in the rose, the vacuum
Drifting under pale gold of Saint Paul's Cross.
Unless your lives accept the space of death
At the centre of your building and your loves,
Within the bells of flowers and bells of towers,
All human aims are hatred and denial
Each life is lived upon the death of others,
And the terrible averted face
Of every man and woman, cuts, like a sword,
The smile from every neighbour face.' "

STEPHEN SPENDER

THREE POEMS FROM A TEXT: ISAIAH LXI: 1-3

I.

Beauty for Ashes

All day I trespassed on my friend's new death,
and talked of it with strangers to give it handle,
the skill of a firm pressure in the handshake,
felt but not regarded. "My friend was killed!"
I had the voice but not the throat for gesture,
the seething in me was beneath control.
"Was killed in Italy on a high road."
I thought of dust, and rock, and hanging trees.
"Never was God revealed upon that road,
never was man saved in that high place!"

By night private, I balanced warring moods,
white anarchs shifting in the moonlit room,
and made of fragments—his lurking underword,
straight eyes, high cheeks, and equable fresh glee—
a sheave of presences to garner home,
harvest and fecund ancestor of cold dawn.
Also, I gathered unknown waste of him
looming within, the smother lifting the wide sea.
Anarch or ancestor, mood called mood.

I have been selfed just so before, and drained.
By ill and various violence have died
at eight an aunt, an uncle nine years later;
a father and grandfather in great age;
and five friends else in swart, unequal time.
Theirs has been the chaos I abide,
of them my self the faltering piety:
my ear for echo, my hope for grace and gesture.
I am in tide with them, their verge in me.

My friend died on no road. My friend was killed
in the rude place that stirs and is the same,
the bottom place that is beyond, the place
of balance and loss, gulf in even eyes.
He died protesting fellowship and self,
the common hope, uttering himself alone.

In either ash is beauty, in all beauty ash.
Accepting all, all but the self yields up.

II.

The Oil of Joy for Mourning

Him whom the old joy fell over,
night rain each night a new lover,
I sing, I see, I wake;
in last me, the unsleeping, the dark rover—
in new him a raw joy for no sake.

2

As once by June dusk he played trover,
at full moon found fourth leaf in cut clover
among grass, dew-honey, and live toil,
so I flush new scent from hush-cover,
from the fit air we breathed, a sweet spoil.

3

Again as, through noon-dazzle, flash plover
beyond number, and are lost in fog-hover,
from his dying—the swept air and sea-slake—
I pluck, I lose, I discover
one flower, all flight, and joy-foil.

III.

A Garment of Praise for the Spirit in Heaviness

How may I see the triune man at once?—
Mowing witchgrass in the quarry road
while grasshoppers clacked before the scythe
one August noon, his easy straddling stride;
or later, swimming far out and on his back,
the half-smoked cabana making long ash
beside me on black granite. Such memories
are of the country of the blue, too far
for capture and too near to see at once.

There is no choice, severalty is all
in life that has been stopped but never finished.
I see him then:
In the north shadow-pool of the opened door
greeting imperceptive friends with gravity and drinks,
and surer friends with candor only less grave—
as sunlight is grave upon a windless bay,
the warm upon the cool, like rum in milk.
He saw people more in relation than as kin;
as next, and touching, than as continuing,
like grasses prostrate in the marshy stream.
Keen on the possible, the first to hand,

but prodding the impossible, he doubted
nothing of the murder in the heart
that might—so long the distance!—be blessing in the eyes:
knowing murder in the eyes was from sacked heart.
Obliged, therefore obliging; owning disorder within,
he observed a gentleman's disregard without.
"Laurel at table, ivy would spread," he said,
"through after-talk, over the sere and sore."
He put the oldest inchoate shapes in words
that rushed, as animals rush before they spring,
to a sharp halt, cresting, then falling fell.
The quiet in his voice was drenched in strength
—always a kind of violence in gear.

A man of family, ancestors were like children:
subject to expectation, certain to disappoint,
always a part of the self—the unfinished part.
A man of state, his privilege to claim none.
An extravagant man, could not afford protection.
In talk he reached straight through what lay between
without quite reaching, so deep the pit he reached from—
so deep you could not tell what depth brimmed there.

Therefore as soldier he cast himself a role
that needed ancestors and children to play;
behind, ahead; dragon slaying dragon.
Folly is more acceptable if played
half by memory, half expectation,
and violence loses unreality.
"Never was an army made less career of war,"
he wrote, and wrote again as I write now,
"so safe from mockery and fond applause."
Never a hopeful man, yet he was hope,
the necessary, upwelling swaddling cry
that man's might and towering skill, man's hand,
might end what fellowed them, in single blow,
then shudder only in the birth of dream.
Man has created that one cry as good;
this shudder of it what we grieve, and praise.

R. P. BLACKMUR

St. Mallarmé the Esoteric*

ANDRÉ GIDE

DURING OUR last conversation," the interviewer said, "you happened to speak of sanctity, describing it, if I remember correctly, as among the highest forms of heroism. Wouldn't it be better to confine the word to its strictly religious meaning?"

I.—It is rather the meaning of the word "heroism" that I should like to restrict and qualify. When I say that we need heroes, I hope you will understand that I am not talking about novels this time. Heroism does not begin until a certain inertia has been overcome, or until a person demands more of himself than he can comfortably give. I am not trying to offer a definition of the word, for that can be found in a dictionary; rather I am using it to describe a particular order of virtues. It sometimes happens that heroes are created by external circumstances. During a battle, a fire or a shipwreck, quite undistinguished people whose virtues had remained dormant may reveal a devotion that amazes themselves. The saint, on the other hand, does not wait for this provocation or command; he is possessed by a secret need; he wishes to rise above the miserable condition of ordinary human kind by obtaining from himself more, still more, the best; he is not easily satisfied. Doubtless he is urged forward by religious zeal and continually admonished by the God to whom he listens in his heart. He is not surprised by himself nor filled with admiration at his deeds; no matter how lofty his flight, he still falls

* In his early twenties, Gide was one of the poets invited to Mallarmé's Tuesdays in the Rue de Rome. Others who attended them at various periods were Jules Laforgue, Henri de Régnier, Stefan George, Paul Claudel, Francis Vielé-Griffin (born in Norfolk, Virginia, during the Civil War), Paul Valéry and Saint-Pol-Roux: perhaps the most distinguished group of poets who, in modern times, have regarded themselves as the disciples of a single master.

The present dialogue with an imaginary journalist was written for *Figaro* in the late spring of 1942, before Gide left Vichy France, where he had been the subject of increasingly violent attacks in the press (with some threats against his person) and established himself in Tunis. The French text of "Interviews Imaginaires" is published in New York by Jacques Schiffin and Company. A complete English translation will be issued later this year by Alfred A. Knopf.—M.C.

short of the perfection at which he aims; and always he suffers from a sense of his own unworthiness, his insufficiency.

HE.—Aren't you describing a quality that artists may also possess?

I.—A few exceptional artists, it is true; and we admire and venerate them for that reason by itself, almost independently of their work. Let us agree that every artist applies himself to his work as best he can. But many other preoccupations are involved that have nothing to do with art; he thinks of money, success, his public standing. No, the men who disregard their private interests and behave toward their ideal (I can find no other word) as saints behave toward the Master who told them, "My kingdom is not of this earth"—such artists are very rare. I was thinking particularly of Flaubert and Mallarmé.

HE.—You say that in this respect your admiration for the man is independent of your admiration for his work?

I.—One moment: I admire the work of Mallarmé, the work of Flaubert; and on this fact depends my admiration for the lives of both men. But the strange dominion that Mallarmé exercised (oh, without claiming to do so) over certain members of my generation was something that owed no more to his work than it did to his conduct of life; to the unusual example of disinterestedness that he set before us.

HE.—Isn't that disinterestedness precisely the quality for which he is being condemned today? The young poets I know either claim to "think with their hands," as Denis de Rougemont says, or at least to regard poetry as a form of participation in life. They protest that the isolation of the poet, resulting from his adherence to the religion of art, was extremely harmful both to poetry, which began to wither when it lost contact with the masses, and to the masses as well, since they were weaned away from poetry.

I.—Every age has new problems to confront. It may be that the relationship between the spiritual and the temporal is one of the chief problems today. Nevertheless I pity the young poet who lets himself be obsessed with it.

HE.—Do you want the poet to be unconcerned with the matters that now preoccupy our thoughts and weigh upon our hearts? Do you want him to live as if on the margins of the world? Do you want him to keep out of difficulties by "making himself scarce," in every meaning of the phrase?

I.—No. There is part of his nature that can and should lend itself to the sad business of human transactions. "I pray not that thou

shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil" was what the apostle said.

HE.—St. Paul was not thinking of poets.

I.—No matter; for what he said applies to them equally. It is not a good thing, for example; it may compromise both his work and the development of his ideas, if the poet depends on that work to earn him a living. In order to think and write freely, Mallarmé, who was wholly possessed by his strange poetic apostleship, spent thirty years as a professor of English in secondary schools. Often the poet must have a double trade, a fact that recently prompted Duhamel to make some very wise observations. Those of us who lived in Mallarmé's circle were ashamed of the very idea that literature could be made to "pay." I remember the scandal that was caused in those days by Jean de Tinan, the author of "Do You Hope to Succeed?" Speaking to his colleagues on the editorial committee of the *Centaure*, he told us not to be suckers, *des poires*; he was through with all that foolishness and in the future he would not deliver his copy unless he was paid for it. The rest of us felt that writing for money was "selling ourselves" in the worst sense of the term. We were not to be purchased; and our thoughts turned to Mallarmé. In those days it seemed to us that Barrès, by entering politics, had forsworn himself and fallen from his glory.

HE.—In those days, too, Zola's novels were selling by the millions of copies.

I.—Mallarmé never had the slightest tone of contempt when he mentioned them; it was simply that he was seeking for something else, something that seemed to us of infinitely greater value.

HE.—After what you began by saying, this would give me to understand that you regarded Mallarmé as a saint.

I.—We most certainly felt admiration for his poetry; for himself, for the man, it was veneration. He was a believer, a zealot.

HE.—A dreamer with his head in the clouds; one who played at give-away and loser-take-all, in the manner of the mystics. It might have been said that he was dazzled by shadows.

I.—And that he preferred the shadow to the living prey. Hence these verses:

*Ma faim qui d'aucuns fruits ici ne se régale
Trouve en leur docte manque une saveur égale.¹*

1. In prose: "My hunger, though regaled here by no fruits, finds equal savor in their learned absence."—*Tr.*

HE.—Do you approve of his depreciating the real to the greater glory of the imaginary?

I.—No, certainly not, but. . .

HE.—And of his taste for, his strange hankering after obscurity?

I.—Doubtless not as an aim in itself, but I approve of it when it leads to poems as luminous and glorious as Mallarmé's. He made great demands on the reader. That is what this dedication expresses in an exquisite manner:

*Attendu qu'il y met du sien,
Vous feuillets de papier frigide
Exaltez-moi, musicien,
Pour l'âme attentive de Gide.²*

HE.—Then poetry, in your estimation, should tend toward the esoteric?

I.—Poetry should tend, or pretend, only to perfection. Obscurity is something that the true poet should neither seek nor fear. What he should fear is affectation. Mallarmé's obscurity has yielded to the commentators. But I did not have to wait for the explications of Royère, Thibaudet, Dr. Mondor, Emilie Noulet or Mauron, however excellent these may be, to fall in love with his poems.

HE.—Does this mean that you understood them perfectly without assistance?

I.—No; but rather that I did not feel the need to understand them perfectly; and that their meaning, which gained rather than lost by remaining a little imprecise, mattered a great deal less than the almost religious emotion aroused in me by their mystery. Their sonorous and incantatory power was such that they preserved the strange charm of this mystery, in spite of the explications I afterwards received. Lovelier verses I have never read.

That poetry, to quote the learned Florentine quattrocentist, Marsilio Ficino, might "by its very nature be filled with enigmas" is a truth that was scarcely admitted in the seventeenth and eighteenth

2. This inscription for Mallarmé's young friend might read in English verse:

*Because he also does his part,
White paper in your frigid sheets,
Inspire the musician to new feats
For André Gide's attentive heart.*

Mallarmé is the musician; it is Gide as the listener who "also does his part."—Tr.

centuries; but rest assured that Mallarmé, in his esotericism, was reviving an ancient tradition of which John Donne in England and Maurice Scève in France were illustrious representatives. They too had made it their resolve and regarded it as a point of honor to remain *secret*. "If the words used by a writer bear within them . . . a hidden subtlety"—*acutezza recondita*, in Ficino's own expression—"they give as it were more authority to his style; they cause the reader to advance more slowly, to rise above himself, to consider more attentively what is said to him and . . . by tiring him a little, they offer him the pleasure attached to the pursuit of difficult things."³

HE.—Yes, that is well said. But doubtless the esotericism of the Renaissance poets consisted largely in teasing the reader's mind with hidden meanings; the poems offered enigmas to which, in many cases, erudition furnished the only key; so that we should be wrong to confuse this sort of obscurity with that of Mallarmé, who aims to be incantatory, in the proper sense of the word you applied to him.

I.—Obviously when Scève begins one of his Dizains with the lines:

*Le Cerf volant aux abois de Austruche,
Hors de son giste esperdu s'envola*

—"The flying Stag, tracked down and flushed from his covert by the Ostrich, takes desperate flight," the only allusions concealed in his verse are historical (as they are elsewhere mythological); and this is also the case in Dizain LV, where he again refers to Charles V of Spain and Austria under the guise of the *Austruche*. But, by effort and as if incidentally, he nevertheless achieves the same incantatory power that Mallarmé seeks and achieves directly. In Scève's case, as too often with Gérard de Nerval, the effort is intellectual and, by that very fact, remains foreign to what constitutes the essence of poetry.

Amor che nella mente mi ragiona

was, if I remember correctly, what Dante said in one of the *Canzone* of his "Convito." To address oneself to the intellect is to invite arguments. Hence, all I should like to retain from Marsilio Ficino's remarks is this: that the poet should seek in the art of verse an obstruc-

3. These remarkable phrases were brought to the attention of French readers by M. Eugene Parturier, who quoted them in his excellent introduction to Maurice Scève's "Dèlie." No longer having the book with me, I am unable to verify the quotation, but hope that I copied it correctly.—A.G.

tion or at least a means of delaying the poetic flood, a recourse against facility; that he should charge his words with more meaning than is granted them by current speech and, by holding back the reader, "by tiring him a little," should permit him to enjoy, in the midst of this very fatigue, a reward that is not to be obtained without pains. On this point there is much more to be said, and we shall return to the subject if you choose. No more for today.⁴

Translated by Malcolm Cowley

4. After this interview was published in *Figaro*, an obliging and sharp-sighted correspondent informed me that the fine phrases I had lent to Marsilio Ficino had been borrowed from Baldassare Castiglione. The absence of reference books is not an excuse to be pleaded for another and more serious error: in this same interview I have attributed to St. Paul words that were spoken by Christ in the "Sacredotal Prayer" (St. John XVII, 15), a mistake that covers me with confusion.—A.G.

THE CONTOURS OF FIXATION

The stoned dogs crawl back through the blood,
Through the conquered weather, through the wet silk light,
To disenchanted masters who are not quite dead.

Like severed heads of a dead age
They gasp in the square, in the alleys of dusk.
Explanations are posted on the shattered walls.

The moon illuminates a cenotaph.
"All is insanity," the dogs conclude,
Yet the odor of blood has a certain appeal.

Their pain soaks eyes on every balcony.
"Forbear, refrain, be scrupulous"—dogs' admonitions,
Sad and redundant, paraphernalia of goodbye,

Hang in the sulphured air like promises of girls.
Then silence. Down the street the lights go dead.
One waits. One waits. And then the guns sound on another hill.

WELDON KEES

Gregory's Dream

KURT H. WOLFF

I WONDERED who I was that Gregory should have come to me with his dream. To make clear all that can be made clear about this affair (and it isn't too much), I say that my friend is a German-born Jew who was expelled by two countries, in addition to Germany, before he came to the United States. I cannot add much more that would explain his dream. Here the many things I know about Gregory, formerly Gottfried, seem irrelevant. In fact, it is possible that his dream is not so much a thing to be interpreted as to be listened to. I find my ideas of its evaluation necessarily, as it were, bold and vague, but the more bold and vague, the more sure I am that Gregory's dream should be listened to.

Gregory came to me at nine in the morning, unexpectedly. I was surprised at his visit because I knew that he usually gets up much later, after his habit of studying until early morning. I should also add that his visit and dream-tale happened only today. After my surprise at his early appearance, his excitement became contagious. "I had a dream," he said, immediately upon entering my door, "and I must tell you before I forget any more. So I start right away. You help me make sense of it.

"I was travelling from Montauk to New York—this goes back to my visit to Long Island, you know. The train was like a toy train, much more so than it is in reality; small wooden carriages that went through a toy landscape. The cars weren't even of one piece, if I remember correctly, but had some sort of changing compartments, that is, I frequently went from one to the other and as soon as I entered a new compartment, the old one separated itself from the carriage and fused into the next—but this was natural and part of the trip. I remember the clatter of the train, especially when we crossed the channel at Bridgewater (is it?) where you can see the Atlantic on both sides of the track. The air was lovely and I had tears in my eyes from its loveliness. It was not absolutely clear, but I thought the small light clouds rather made the air clearer than if the sky had been a blank. The meadows were green, flocks of ducks were

busy chattering and eating, the whole moment was a tautology, if I may say so—perfectly obvious and evident, and I content, in it.

“I remember two instances that I must mention here. It was morning or forenoon—or have I already said it? Perhaps the description of the landscape has made this clear. But at one time of the journey I looked out from the window or the platform, rather, and to the left, on another track, saw a single carriage, like those on our train, run in a direction slightly divergent from ours, but almost parallel. Yet the carriage was obviously a freight car, representing the freight edition of the passenger models which were ours. As it ran away from us, the bright evening sun made it glow vividly; it ran along and away, an orange-burning wooden funnel on rails. As if to make quite sure that I had not missed this car, a second one soon followed it on the same track. I never bothered to find out how each was driven—they rode by themselves, perhaps under the impact of the push from a distant locomotive the existence of which I didn't try to ascertain, however. Directly I found myself behind the front view of our train and, still in the evening light, saw that at a small crossing laundry, of various darkish glowing colors, was hung low across the tracks. This is indeed a very quiet line, I thought, because the train was actually slowing down to allow the people to remove their wash before it passed. Yet it was fast enough to make me fear we should tear it down or at least soil it, and at the next moment I was even afraid that we might run over the girls and the old man (the station master probably) who had come to take it off. But then I saw that after having started to busy themselves with the laundry on the tracks, they thought better and stepped aside hastily, turning the wheels on which the washline was running, thus moving the laundry toward them and taking it off before it would be squeezed between the line or wire and the wheel. (Now I know I had seen this in Genoa between rows of high houses across the deep narrow streets.) While I was wondering why the people, instead of drying the laundry away from the tracks, had chosen this insecure spot, thinking that perhaps the steel rails reflected the sun and thus hastened the drying process or even made for purity of color, or that it was a wise thought to expose the laundry, just before withdrawing it, to some hot puffs of the locomotive, I was struck by the fact that the washline was very low. I wondered whether it was going to be torn to pieces by the train or whether it would entangle, like a liana, the locomotive itself. But I had no time to think about this problem, for we had already passed the crossing, God knows how, and when I looked back I saw the people busily rehangng their laundry, this time not using their

wheel mechanism, but doing it in an old-fashioned way by pinning it directly to the line across the tracks. Nothing had suffered. I was now sure that those people were gypsies whom the government had appointed to serve as guardians of this particular crossing. They were quite domesticated gypsies, however; the father was short and smoked a small curved pipe which almost disappeared in his stubbly beard; the two girls, of twenty and seven perhaps, wore tight bodices and wide frocks; all were sunburnt, dirty, and out of another world and foreign to this.

"Very soon afterward the train arrived at its final destination; yet I remember nothing of a station, and perhaps there wasn't any. It was a gray afternoon. The evening had disappeared, and the afternoon taken its place. It was natural enough, but only now do I realize that the casually intervening evening had obviously contracted the normal course of time, for not more than an hour could have passed between the morning on the train and our arrival at the final destination. We were under the shadows of a great city, walking on a very high concrete ramp that had no railing to separate us from the railroad yards—or was it a river?—deep down at our right. We—I walked, at the left side, of two Negroes, the sister next to me, her brother at her right, farthest toward the abyss—we were talking. I remarked upon the galoshes the girl was wearing. As if to match the general color of the scene, they were gray, not black, as is more customary. Yet they were new, and I asked the girl how she had managed to buy them, rubber goods being almost unavailable. She answered that there were plenty of galoshes and that anybody could buy them for only a nickel (or was it something-and-a-nickel) a pair. I was surprised to hear this and vaguely thought how I could make use of my discovery, but I quickly remembered that my wife had a pair, rather old, and that I myself didn't need any, anyway. But I turned to her brother, thinking that I might profit by this occasion to find out about him and to learn something about the Negro. He seemed amiable enough.

"Here I must stop to analyze my feelings very carefully. First of all, the Negro struck me as friendly and handsome. Not handsome, really, but rather neutral, a man I could take up and get along with. I analyze this *now*, you must understand, after the dream is over, and I wonder about myself. Honestly, I had that feeling of neutrality, that is, as if he could have been non-neutral, sympathetic or antipathetic. This shows that I must secretly feel that some Negroes—black, sweaty perhaps—might appear antipathetic to me. I am surprised and horrified at the thought, for I really didn't believe, in my waking

stage, that antipathy was part of the range of my feelings toward the Negro. Of course, I love to believe that it isn't, in other words, that the dream didn't reveal anything, that it only was an erratic incident, picturesque. And yet, you see what a weak word the word picturesque is. In fact, I felt kindly disposed toward this Negro—and did not even realize how close this came to patronizing him. What happened afterward now clearly appears to have been this Negro's revenge, and hence it is of immense relief to me. I feel immensely relieved that he should have had his revenge, because it shows me that he knew very much more about the equality of races than I did; more precisely, that I still can learn, and that I learned from *him* toward whom I feel so guilty. Indeed I learned a great deal—intellectually at least. As far as my life is concerned, I'd better go on with the dream first. Then perhaps you can tell me something about this.

"The young man had mentioned that he was studying in New York. He had said this in the same way his sister had answered my questions about her galoshes; she too, I believe, had told me what she was doing, but I forget. I asked him what he was studying. It was either then or only after he told me that he was investigating the situation of the Negro in New York, that he asked me to mind my own business, that is, to concentrate on my work in the city where I had told him that I was living, rather than to meddle with his. I forget which. But I definitely remember that I was shocked by his lack of confidence, that I felt wronged by his hostility.

"Yet I did not have much time to think about my feelings, for as we reached this stage of the conversation—whichever it was—we had also reached a narrow platform or square beneath and among high houses, which again reminded me of Genoa, as the laundry had. (Or did I say that I compared the rail laundry with the wash hanging across the narrow deep streets in Genoa only after I had awakened? I don't recall.) I had just time to tell him that I was a sociologist at the University of M., and that I was especially interested in race relations; just time enough to suggest that he was surely familiar with the field and with the good motives that urged people to study it—when I found myself in a quickly narrowing throng of people. Most of them I don't remember, but they were all, or almost all, Whites, and the Negro undoubtedly was with them, body and soul. The cry 'Huntsman!' passed from one to the other in the group around me, and I immediately understood not only that it referred to me, but also what it meant: nothing less than that I was a German spy. I think I had told my Negro that I was a Jew thrown out of Germany. At any rate, the situation was absurd, but it was troubling

too. For whether or not I had told my Negro that I was hunted, not hunting, how could I explain this now? Or, rather, how could I prove it? And what good was my proof anyway if they were out for a hunt? Perhaps they were. I was being jostled by the throng. I call it a throng; there were probably no more than a dozen people. One figure stood out, and it still stands out, in my memory. I was knuckled gently, ironically, in my back, and when I turned around I saw a short, broad, swift-hopping, powerful man with sly and glinting eyes and wild hair. A moment I hesitated, but then I recognized him. He was the butcher at C. near Guernica, whom my wife and I had often talked about when we saw him bent under the load of a whole beef side so that it looked as if the bloody carcass were riding him, rather than that he carried the carcass. And yet, he had walked and lived lightly, nightmare that he was, with his enormous arms of muscles and more muscles, tattooed all over with some obvious, some less easily decipherable symbols which dated back to the time when he had sailed the seas. His seafaring eyes had remained with him and were a constant surprise to us as they blinked from out of his goblin's face above his broad short body drudging under the enormous loads of skinned animals. His eyes were of a disarming blue. At the sight of a woman, including my wife, they would suddenly become quite large, but for never more than a moment—knowing and yet in ever renewed innocence.

"He was the one that so gently knuckled me in the back. Undoubtedly he recognized me—the way he looked at me couldn't mean anything else. I thought I was lost in this throng, although I had not the slightest idea how I came to be damned. Yet I hoped I might be forgiven. Thinking my explanation would immediately clear the misunderstanding, but deeper down rather convinced that the meaning of my words—of words—would not be received by the crowd that was bent on undoing me, I cried, half-smiling, half-sweating: 'Huntsman!' My God it's not 'huntsman,' God in Heaven knows it, it's '*Hunted!*' You misspelled the word! But they only laughed, and the butcher slapped his thighs, blinking at me, extraordinarily amused.

"I woke up. I swear I wish I knew how it would have gone on if I hadn't awakened, but you know that I tell the truth when I say that it was at that moment that I've described, not before nor later, that the dream was over. All that's left is excitement and some worry—already less than there was at first when I woke up.

"What do *you* make of this?"

But Gregory didn't wait for me to reply. He took his coat which he had thrown over a chair when he came, and without further ado

left me. I think he blushed when he went out so hurriedly, but maybe I am making this up for I remember that he had been unusually flushed when he first arrived and had remained so throughout his narration.

It didn't occur to me to think that I was more gifted at analyzing dreams or life than was Gregory, but not having dreamed his dream I thought I was perhaps less emotional about it than he was. Nor did I have to be, I reflected, not being Jewish and having lived in America all my life. I was meditating upon Gregory's sensitivity and the twisted guilt, toward the Negro and perhaps toward that butcher, which became untwisted in his dream, and I thought he should rather be grateful for his enlightenment, particularly—but this is a thought I may not be able to express very clearly—since it had occurred by way of such interesting, beautiful and true images, in a kind of satisfactory integration, as it were. I was already—in the afternoon, after having done my day's work—already on my way to Gregory to communicate my thoughts to him. I was even feeling flattered at being intelligent enough to anticipate a question of his. Even if he profited (so he would react to my expositions; I knew him) by this dream to change his ideas about Negroes, and Jews, and Germans, and to have new thoughts about the role he himself played as a sociologist, he would ask if all this might not be overthrown by a new dream, and what totally unexpected things a new dream might not reveal; and thereupon I would answer that I found no objection to further revelations but on the contrary considered it rather fortunate to have dreams that are so obviously enlightening and accelerate the processes by which we clarify ourselves and the world in which we live.

I say I was on my way to him when I had these thoughts. Yet my contentment was suddenly disturbed. I realized how complacent and self-congratulatory I was. First I was struck by the insight that my whole chain of reasoning was purely intellectual: what if the dream meant more to Gregory than something which could be solved intellectually; more than a problem, no matter in which field—metaphysics, mathematics, even sociology? Had he not, in his own words, intimated as much? What *did* it mean? Yet this question was only like a shocking flash; the thought which immediately followed it was infinitely more violent. In fact it made me stop in the middle of the street, and some people probably looked at me. It began when, in a mood of mere innocent curiosity, I asked myself what it meant that in my reflections upon his dream I had contrasted him, the persecuted Jew, with myself, the Gentile who at least didn't have the experience of being persecuted, but who perhaps himself harbored feelings of

persecution. This simple thought provoked a host of others. Not that I compared Gregory's uneasiness in front of the Negro (the dream Negro?) with a Gentile's awkward feelings vis-à-vis a Jew—of course, I at once recalled that this comparison could easily become a doctrine which would gain in scientific value to the degree that it was equipped with as yet unknown qualifications. Rather, I thought that perhaps we both, Gregory and I, harbored some hidden hostilities and that, who knows, he was a step further than I, who had not had a dream, toward overcoming them. Or were my present reflections the equivalent of his dream? Be this as it may—had I not explained his dream in terms of his experience as a persecuted Jew, a Jew? Helplessly I answered myself that Jews are different from Gentiles. I even realized the danger, the cowardice, of hiding behind this statement, which thus prevents us from understanding one another. What is more, I contrasted this last proposition with another one: that if we understand one another completely the differences disappear and there can be no more talk of Jews and Gentiles. Nay, I went further, clear up to the subtlety of asking myself how I knew that Gregory's dream should be interpreted in terms of his being a Jew. Here I stopped, although I felt considerably closer to a solution—of whatever it was that troubled me. But the sheer multitude of my thoughts was overwhelming; at the same time I appeared to myself an incorrigible intellectual who was caught in his own, inescapable stupidity. I longed to thrash out these problems with Gregory. Also, I was not unaware of my feeling that the very dealing with them on this intellectual plane might help him to become more detached from his dream, in case this should still appear to be desirable; yet, too, I remember having blushed at this, because it had something patronizing in it. But eventually I came to the point where I had no time to think further. I was at the door of Gregory's apartment and had rung the bell.

I was surprised that nobody answered. Gregory was usually home at this hour. Also, very likely he expected me. When I was about to ring a second time I saw a note sticking out of his letterbox and found that the box was open. The note was for me; he had indeed expected me. It was pencil-written, obviously in a hurry. All it said was, "I am off for New York to look for my Negro. See you soon. G."

At first I was stupefied, then I thought Gregory was a fool. But immediately I checked myself by thinking of my friend who decidedly was not a fool. Finally it dawned upon me that really he would not find his Negro in his brain, and much less in mine, in our conversation, and that New York was as likely a place as any to find him. Perhaps he was also looking forward to stumbling across his dream

place or platform among the high houses and meeting people there to enlighten him. Had he not found the butcher at C. in his dream? And might he not find his dream Negro in New York? My further thoughts were entirely muddled; at least this is all I remember of them. As I said, the whole thing happened only today. Gregory, in spite of all his experience and training, has certainly kept his spontaneity; his friendship is ever surprising to me. I have never more truly loved him than today, and he will see me soon, just as he wrote.

I have to add one more thought, perhaps more important than any others. By now it is late in the night, and I have been thinking about Gregory's dream ever since I came home. I now believe his dream must be understood not so much with reference to him and me and our individual guilt, as with reference to our time. Undoubtedly this is what Gregory came to recognize long before I did, probably right after he told me the dream, if it did not become clear to him during his very telling of it. I simply mean that the dream once more reminded him, and me, of the impossibility of living on in spite of, no, in compliance with, the unspeakable misery and meanness of the world. Did the dream reveal that we are smug enough to live on anyway? Did it even tell us that we are not free of the feelings that make for these crimes, for the Curse? I see I was rather slow and clumsy in taking so much time to realize that it did, but now I do realize it and don't know what to do. Gregory isn't here; as if he could help me! Did he go to New York to find a Messiah? A nigger, a kike? Perhaps he went in the same way in which Shmuel Ziegelboim committed suicide, leaving behind a letter of protest against certain specified earthly powers. Gregory has not yet given up, he is still searching. The thought that he might have killed himself is terrible, but suddenly no longer far-fetched. God help him to find his Messiah, and if his skin be green with red dots and splashes! God help me close with this hope and wake up tomorrow with more of it, not less!

Mr. Eliot and Notions of Culture: a Discussion

R. P. BLACKMUR

MY POINT OF DEPARTURE is not from the beliefs which Eliot expresses—for to most of them I assent—but from the implications which seem to me to lie in the relations between religion and culture, which he did not express. The implications in his use of the word religion affect profoundly the validity of his total position. If Eliot is speaking as an Anglo-catholic—if he adheres to a supernatural revelation institutionalized in a particular church—then his argument becomes to those outside the fold progressively inapplicable—the further it is pushed—to the actual world. The challenge of the supernatural revelation is one to which I have nothing to respond with; and I must needs be doomed—or damned—another way. If, on the other hand, Eliot means only what he here says—if he is holding nothing back, and is not aching to add any authority beyond that of his words—then his argument opens itself for development and criticism.

If religion is, as he says in different places, a “common faith and order,” or is “the body of beliefs which gives . . . culture significance” without further specification, then his argument is much strengthened. But it would be strengthened, for me, much more if both statements were made the other way round, so that the ideal is the envisaged term rather than the beginning or motor term. The “common faith and order” *is* religion; “the body of beliefs which gives culture significance” *is* religion. The feeling of history in my bones—my sense of how thought has moved, and is moving—suggests that such has been the actual process of the creation of religion during what Eliot calls periods of original culture; and I think that the failure to recognize that this is the direction of the process is what has vitiated our sense of the significance of religion and is also what has aborted our efforts to conceive the materials of our culture.

The point is crucial. For most people, the supernatural aspects of the Christian tradition are no longer a matter of secular experience, or of any kind of experience, even inherited experience, or what is called instinct. No doubt much of the actual is thereby shut out into

unknowable unity or intolerable chaos; but it is only the natural that can touch, or drive, or attract the secular mind; and we must work with the experience that we have without use of experience to which we cannot pretend. That is the point of my departure from Eliot; all that seems to me false in his position comes from his implied resort to unavailable experience; all that seems true or valid in his position comes from his addiction to the actual secular experience of our time. Thus I would not only transpose the terms of his statements about religion, I would submit them to a secular conversion and put them together as follows: A common faith and order make up the body of beliefs which give culture significance.

I do not suggest such a conversion in order to damage the foundation of Eliot's position, nor because I cannot swallow dogma as such, but rather because, for me, such a conversion reveals his foundation and utters a dogma which vitalizes the enterprise of the secular mind. In a desperate world of nature it seems good to get rid of the unnecessary despair caused by the effect of asserted supernatural authority to which there is no access; anything less than such an amputation is dishonesty; anything more is pride; the balance between is precarious, perhaps unmanageable, but necessary to life.

Let us see what such a conversion—such an amputation—does to Eliot's *Notes Toward a Definition of Culture*. As his arguments stand, he can neither define culture nor plan for it but can only feel it as spiritual soil: a diffidence of intellect and uncertainty of feeling which would have been unlikely in the age of Christian faith, when the supernatural was accessible to the secular mind because it was a tensile part of it and the very experiment of thought itself. Making the conversion, do we not immediately see—not what culture is—but how to go about discovering the materials in the actual society that confronts us. Can we not at once begin looking, not entirely with our own eyes, for we use what aids we can, but wholly and directly *through* our own eyes at the things that do exist and are believed, at anarchy struggling to order, at order combating anarchy: the very body of beliefs which if we can see them together give our culture significance and make the enterprise of envisaging them upon a higher level once again an approximate possibility. Can we not then feel of the past, the Christian past and also the human past of which the Christian was but one effort at universal expression, not the weight of its dead formularies, but its permanence in change, its change in permanence, its pressing, enveloping life: all in the life we actually live. Are we not then strengthened and convicted by the vital dogma, that as man has had the power to create imperfectly both his society and

its death many times in the past, so he has now the power—if he but musters his intelligence and his will—to create it imperfectly again out of the needs and desires, the energies and abilities, the institutions and the individuals, the good conflicting with the evil, of existing human life: the only materials man has ever had, his skill and wisdom, his fumbling and folly, in handling which, makes the whole sum of what he has been able to transmit: the human tradition.

We are it seems to me at a beginning time in the history of cultures and are more disturbed, because we know more about it, by the distress of what is ending, than by the stress of what is beginning, of which we know only that it is tearing us—us, not the dead past—to pieces with an intensity and a spread of energy of which, with each fresh outburst from the French Revolution to the present revolution, we have successively thought ourselves incapable. The long Christian revolution aimed at the unification of Europe, and by implication of the world, by the force of a universal church. The present urban and technical revolution is one stage in a grand revolution which aims at the unification of the world—and by its implication the individual and his free communities—under the common beliefs of a single society. The beliefs have found so far only partial articulations, and the contradictions between them have not been composed into an order nor envisaged as a unity capable of digesting compatible disorders, tolerating incompatible disorders, or making room for fresh disorders as they appear.

Eliot seems to desire to articulate these common beliefs, whatever they may be, in Christian terms and is led to dejection and an ill spirit, because, by applying his terms, he has missed a large part of the values by which he himself, and all the rest of us, actually exist. I do not know that the effort to discover and unite by secular means the common beliefs of the actual world will succeed; certainly it will not succeed permanently or completely; perhaps what Plato called a noble lie will have to be told before it succeeds at all; but I do know that Eliot's kind of effort is impossible for many and sterile for most of the people who will have to make whatever effort is made; and I know that for some of us only a secular effort is possible to participate in, for only that effort requires of us that we muster all our will and all our intelligence towards the mastery of experience: which is the human tradition.

CLEMENT GREENBERG

1. MR. ELIOT DECRIES the assumption that "clerical labor is more dignified than manual labor," yet he identifies the elite with culture. He admits that a new upper class means a new Culture; he allows that our present upper class is in a state of decay; yet he wishes to preserve our present Culture. He pronounces the late stage in the Culture at which skepticism begins to corrode the religious cult to be "indeed a necessary one," yet he desires to suspend that stage—without suggesting how. Mr. Eliot's article is rendered inconclusive in the main by a conflict in himself between historical fatalism and utilitarian hope. And given the familiar assumptions of its argument, his article could have made a contribution only had it offered concrete proposals. But there are none.

2. One of Eliot's underlying premises seems to be that the generic form, Culture, *qua* form and *qua* entelechy is immutable. Both primitive and advanced Cultures obey the same basic laws as regards their development and operation; they differ only in scale and content. The emphasis put on religion as the activator of the Culture excludes almost all perspectives of change in its generic form. The schematic structure of the Culture in its various stages is regarded as fixed. Here Mr. Eliot agrees more or less with Spengler. Yet even Frobenius, who was almost as reactionary as Spengler but knew a great deal more anthropology, held that the Culture as a form has since the beginning of history been evolving in a more and more secular direction; and that in the long run the central function of religion has diminished. With this there has been a change in the very structure of Cultures. Meanwhile religion itself has undergone an evolution, its focus narrowing from the practical, the magical and propitiatory to the ultimate and the metaphysical. Thus religion's control over behavior shrinks, its place being taken, at least theoretically, by ethics. The Christian may appeal more frequently to moral postulates but he does not negotiate with the supernatural as constantly as did the Egyptian, ancient Jew, the Hindu, or even the Fifth-Century Greek. And the typical personality produced by Western Christianity is the least religious in history. But this has not made our Culture necessarily inferior to any other in art, politics, economic life, or morality.

A new or revived total Culture of the future is likely to diminish still further the importance of religion. It may be that religion will dissolve itself into the ethical, discarding revelation and the envelope

of the supernatural. Or what is more likely and less banal, it will be superseded by an ethos resting on a conviction of the absolute and integral value of the human personality. It is up to Mr. Eliot to show that an ethos other than a revealed religion cannot of necessity function as the "common faith and order" he declares indispensable to a high total Culture.

3. Mr. Eliot maintains that culture is "something to which a few can be raised," and "that a high degree of culture in an equalitarian society can only be attained if the great majority of men can be raised to a level, and kept at a level, which has never been remotely approached in the past." The same can be asserted of religion: that only a few in the past have been capable of religion, and that the religion of the mass of mankind has so far been little more than superstition. Witness the unceasing complaints of medieval churchmen as to the quality of their peasant parishioners' faith, which they denounce as crude superstitiousness. Witness the fact that over eighty-five percent of the saints come from the upper classes. Religiosity seems to have depended on much the same factor as culture: leisure, which depends in turn on the economic level and security of the individual. It is conceivable that if socialism were to provide leisure with economic security at a sufficiently high level to most of humanity, a great many more people would discover a religious vocation in themselves.

There are questions on which religion has given, and in most cases still gives, more immediate psychological satisfaction than science and philosophy: questions as to the purpose or significance of existence, the assignment of responsibility, the justification for the basic unsatisfactoriness of life, and so forth. In these connections the consolations of a naturalistic outlook are pretty lame, aesthetically speaking. Certain people may continue, therefore, to find some sort of religion indispensable, and most likely there will always be religious natures. But socialism could not countenance institutional religion as the authority for public discipline, nor could it countenance official specialists in the religious "mysteries." It will be enough for socialism that every human being—his body no less than his soul—is regarded as an end in himself. It is necessary to add, I suppose, that men cannot regard each other as ends in themselves unless they are freed from the necessity of exploiting and being exploited by one another.

4. A circumstance which partly determined the nature of total Cultures in the past is the fact that each has been territorially circumscribed and that no one Culture has ever had the field to itself—not even the Culture of the Egyptians. Now, however, that Western

industrial capitalism is in the process of establishing a global economy with coordinated methods of production on all continents, the possibility of a global Culture appears. Only socialism can realize such a Culture, and it could do so only by accepting and even encouraging regional variations. Meanwhile our deteriorating Western Culture duplicates—and will do so increasingly—the imperialist and exploitative role of Western capitalism. The colonial Cultures, most of them decrepit in any case, are being done to death by mass-produced, ready-made commodities exported from New York and California. There will soon be little diversity of Cultures for Mr. Eliot's common religious faith to unify. There will be just greater and lesser degrees of backwardness; and the unifying agents will be movies, comic books, Tin Pan Alley, the Luce publications (with editions in all languages), Coca Cola, rayon stockings, class interests, and a common boss. These are all quite compatible, incidentally, with religion, but not at all with socialism.

WILLIAM PHILLIPS

MR. ELIOT'S ARGUMENT SEEMS to be as much a symptom as an analysis of the present state of "culture"—a symptom of the desperate lethargy now prevailing, as society is stalled, with none of its problems solved and many forgotten. In this stalemated situation, in which the most advanced positions are defensive and repetitive, Mr. Eliot's stand appears to be typically regressive and all too general in a kind of timeless discontent.

Not that anyone can disagree with Mr. Eliot's familiar observations on the alienation of culture from society and from itself. But they are largely a description rather than a diagnosis of the cultural malady. And his prescription of religion as a remedy for the atomization of culture strikes me as but an elaborate metaphor of unity, though, to be sure, it is not without far-reaching political implications, for it could be realized on a world scale only through some form of clerical fascism.

The divorce of "high culture" from the folk, and its schizoid division into the respectable and the unrespectable, the academic and avantgardist, is, of course, a product of the middle-class mind, with its mercantilism, its snobbery, its secular energy and its sense of cultural property. And it is only its mythology of free enterprise that has so far permitted a semi-independent elite to flourish in the crevices of society. As a result, this appropriation of "culture" by a priestly caste,

as Mr. Eliot effectively reminds us, has exacted an enormous toll from the production as well as the consumption of art, and is now threatening the very existence of the elite—though it is true that there has been some compensation, in that the ensuing tensions have been extremely favorable for creative activity. The point is, however, that this cultural pattern is imbedded in the structure of society, and I cannot see that Mr. Eliot is offering us anything more, at best, than a freezing of existing social relations and a mummification of history in order to merge the past with the present. It goes almost without saying that institutions cannot be moved from one epoch to another like so much historical furniture. Nor, even if it were possible to preserve the present social order and endow it with a religious homogeneity, is it clear just how this would improve our intellectual life. Anything like the so-called medieval synthesis—which by the way was actually a delicate and changing equilibrium between various contending forces—would surely be an anomaly today in an irretrievably secularized world whose divisions and conflicts represent deep-seated social contradictions that cannot simply be reconciled by an act of the imagination. If such proposals for cultural unification as Mr. Eliot's, be they literary or religious, are to have any meaning for us, it is only as myths projected by the literary mind in order to sustain itself in these dark and critical times.

I think the contradictions in Mr. Eliot's position become more evident if we examine concretely some of the cultural phenomena to which he refers. Obviously, the character of modern art reflects its origins and antagonism to a society whose industrial and scientific advances and organized philistinism have led, on the one hand, to an enormous expansion of consciousness, and on the other, to a contraction of the moral and imaginative self. How else account for our urban, alienated, skeptical, self-indulgent art?—or its dissociation of the ego and its search for a symbolism to express its detachment as well as its identification with society as a whole? But the imposition of a common religious culture could not help but completely alter the values of the elite and the accents of art, perhaps to the point of changing even our idea of the creative act. Certainly a socialist system, which would at least provide the natural conditions for an organic society, is bound to produce esthetic forms and relations utterly different from those now prevailing and almost inconceivable in terms of our present sensibility. The question, it seems to me, is not whether the elite step down or the folk step up, but rather what the effects of any social change would be on our creative life. One can no more imagine *Finnegans Wake*, say, or abstract art, in a socialist

world than in the medieval one. Yet Mr. Eliot nowhere faces this problem; in fact he implies throughout that the modern tradition would carry on, only under more favorable conditions. Thus, in discussing the nature of the elite, he apparently conceives it as a kind of hereditary caste that would naturally transmit its social interests and its cultural norms, for he assigns it a permanent social status over and above the sum of its achievement. How, then, would it convert itself into an intellectual hierarchy of a religious community? And what place would be occupied by those bohemian and dissident movements that periodically refresh and revolutionize art, being more concerned with making a new tradition than preserving an old one?

In general, Mr. Eliot seems to think of the elite as a conservative force, perhaps because he has his eye mainly on the past. And though he deplores our museum culture, he himself tends to view culture as a vast museum, presided over by the elite, who stock it with the proper objects, and so order our taste as to appreciate only the chosen works. The truth is, however, that even if we wanted to improvise so highly civilized an exchange between creator and consumer, a strict regimentation would be necessary not only to purge the folk of its "popular" art but also to transform the elite into cultural wardens. For, as Koestler points out elsewhere in this issue of *PARTISAN REVIEW*, the intelligentsia—or the elite, as Mr. Eliot prefers to call it—is scarcely an agency for the conservation of culture or the improvement of taste; on the contrary, its role is that of independent thinking and innovation in the arts. Hence the most advanced sections of the elite tend to be radical, dissident, and uncompromising, and to relate themselves, however indirectly or unconsciously, to those social forces that challenge the economic and cultural exploitation of man. Thus the will to independence of the elite may be said to have a political meaning, insofar as it constitutes an attack on the conditions that create and imprison the elite. And if this will to independence has now become inseparable from the sheer effort to survive, it is because society is now finding it just as profitable to rationalize the production of ideas as the production of commodities.

Mr. Eliot observes at one point that the totalitarian "tendency—dissimulated as a reaction from overt disorder—towards the unification of thought and behavior, in an artificial pattern" is a form of escape from the overwhelming freedoms of modern society—an idea, incidentally, that has been more fully developed by Eric Fromm. Yet I cannot help feeling that it is just such a yearning for intellectual security and authority that lies behind Mr. Eliot's vision of a compact and orderly ecclesiastical culture.

I. A. RICHARDS

THE PART OF MR. ELIOT'S *Notes on Culture* which I am venturing to discuss touches on education. With most of his argument I seem to myself to be in reluctant agreement. I agree with his choice of a definition for 'culture.' His choice does pick out "world and imperial problems" and the "common danger to all the races of the world." It separates our concern with these from "the preservation of windmills." It combines rightly the "culture of a class" and "of a whole people"—"two meanings . . . to be kept distinct but always in relation." It deeply remembers the soil throughout.

Why be reluctant then? Because the outcomes of this view are so black and disheartening. "The effects of an industrial civilization have combined to deprive the mass of humanity of its native culture." Mr. Eliot knows these "commonplaces of observation," and I do not doubt that they are as dismaying to him as to anyone. A million disturbances of relative rates of needed change have led us to a condition so grave that the victims are ceasing to know the causes of the trouble. Another more violent and far wider industrial or technical revolution is upon us with still more dangerous local accelerations in our ways, still more disastrous to our balance. We are forgetting even what we would be. It looks as though this time all the cultures everywhere would be replaced by artifacts—advertisement, pulps, comics, soap opera and screen entertainment, televised or direct—the familiar threat to the unfamiliar leisure. And as though the resistances and defenses our culture puts up at all levels—mass education, popularization, scholarly toil, research and museum mindedness—will with the best intentions merely join in the attack, destroying the culture from within as the sales and production pressures converge on it from without.

Facing this darkness, Mr. Eliot has faith to offer us—faith in the possibility of "a common faith and order." That prompts to some action no doubt. It has prompted him in all his work including the writing of these clarifying Notes. I am not underestimating Mr. Eliot's importance as a defender of the faith. I think he has rallied the broken and made the continuance of the struggle possible in countless cases. But reflection, prayer and patient waiting for a miraculous deliverance is not, he would himself insist, their whole duty for all men. There is much to be done which is being neglected. And with this I come to his remarks on Education.

"Culture," he says, "is certainly *not* Education, and to think that

we can deliberately produce culture by educating a class, or a selected group, or the whole people for culture, is to expect the cart before the horse." One is tempted to remark that this expectation was duly fulfilled when the motor car came! But, more seriously, is not Mr. Eliot in the definition of "Education" he is using, doing the very things he so skilfully avoids doing with "Culture"—using it in senses which though current and accepted, and therefore indicative and important, are not the senses most needed in this discussion?

Let me grant at once that what he says about Education is true—for his use of the word: "The only affirmation about education, perhaps, that comes within the scope of this paper, is this: that it is only in a very restricted sense that education produces culture—it is more widely true to say that the culture produces the education." I agree as to what he is talking about here. Education, *as we have known and practised it*, won't produce even a tolerable *ersatz* culture to replace our dying worlds. I share his view of the "laborious inefficiency" and "spasms of alarm" in and with which "we endeavor to supply by education and enlightenment" the native culture we are being deprived of. And yet . . . is this because of the *inefficiency*, because it is *alarm* not zeal which moves us, because we have as yet neither seen clearly what to do in Education nor how to do it—or is it a brute fact in the nature of things that better ways of imparting "a right notion of what is valuable, of what we mean by success, and of what types of men we admire" are necessarily and forever beyond human powers of discovery and use?

To be concrete: we are only now beginning to know how to teach well the most teachable things—reading, writing and mathematics. We are only now beginning to find out, through these humble studies in method, how to avoid the wasteful, stultifying confusions, misunderstandings and aberrations our random undesigned ways of teaching in all subjects promote. I do not say that better ways of communicating the active principle of moral order are in sight. I do say that great improvements in Education as "a department of intellectual design" are. And for me this changes the picture, lightening the darkness.

Since what may be called the traditional means of maintaining or renewing the culture are being destroyed by technological change, the remedy, I conceive, is in improving our other means. The sense of "Education" I miss in Mr. Eliot's Notes would make it "the study and pursuit of intellectual and moral order." I am not certain how far this differs from something Mr. Eliot would call by other names. It is not, for me, 'philosophy' in anything less than Plato's sense. It

might be *paideia*. It is not something to be brought down but something to which we can be raised. I am glad to be reminded by Mr. Eliot that "a high degree of culture (or Education) in an equalitarian society can only be attained if the great majority of men can be raised to a level, and kept at a level, which has never been remotely approached in the past." I agree. But, after reflecting upon it, I conclude that this very difficulty is no deterrent. High things are hard. And I do not see how this greatest of human efforts is to be made unless the salvation we are seeking is for all.

Mr. Eliot ends on a hopeful note. "If we can keep our minds clear . . . we shall be working for those changes which really matter." How to *make* minds clear as well as keep them clear is, I suggest, for us, as it was for Socrates, the key question. Education is an embryonic study still.

THE MERMAIDS

(From *The Hunchbacked Flute-Player*)

The Nereïds beneath the nitid moon,
Having fatigued the mermen at the play
Of love and left them in an amorous swoon,
Throw to the waves their necklaces of spray,
Then dive to gardens secret to the noon:

Gardens where sea-gods lovers of the storm,
Dreading the silence, never penetrate.
The lamps that glow upon each undine form
Are living; see their tendrils palpitate
In waters that the sun will never warm.

To make the couches where the nymphs by pairs
Recline for dim subaqueous delights
Coral has heaped on coral for more years
Than the nine towns of Troy have lasted nights.
To their little deaths the sea-maids yield no tears.

In crystal goblets from a deep-sea gem
They pour wine of the sea-anemone,
And to a coral mouth they lift the stem,
And sing the song Ulysses heard at sea,
And play the games that Lesbos learned from them.

PHILIP BLAIR RICE

History of an Unhistorical Mind

WILLIAM BARRETT

DESPITE WHAT look like several great examples from the past, the intellectual autobiography is really a modern literary genre. Its possibilities as a *major* form emerge only from a complicated sense of history and an equally complicated sense of the dependency of human personality upon obscure and very complex factors of causation. A lost autobiography of a Plato or a Spinoza would be a sensational scholarly discovery; but our daydreams of the richness of self-revelation in such unwritten works are self-defeating, depending upon an anachronistically modern sense of history that our imaginations are surreptitiously imputing to the ancient authors.

Rousseau was in fact justified in his triumphant proclamation, at the beginning of his *Confessions*, of the revolutionary character of his book. And if at first reading of this brag we think sceptically that the ancient world gave us a greater human document under the same title, St. Augustine's *Confessions*, we recollect quickly that the latter is, properly speaking, not an autobiography at all, that obviously the word "Confessions" means something different for the two men. But where Rousseau is writing to express a personality, not to analyze or to understand it, even the most irresponsibly hysterical of modern writers could not, on the same subjects, escape an uneasy suspicion of the causes that might explain the hysteria. Thus the gap between Rousseau and Henry Adams, writing a century and a quarter later, is as profound as that between Rousseau and St. Augustine. And Adams himself, had he written a generation later, when Freud had joined Marx as a dominant figure, would have experienced an even more troubled and richer sense of the degree to which his personal fate had been produced for him and not willed.

The sciences of man are only at their beginning, but our anticipation of the regions within which human personality is circumscribed and conditioned outstrips the degree of our positive knowledge; as the seventeenth century's philosophic vision of mechanism had already outstripped its positive physical knowledge. But the fact which almost dialectically complements the foregoing is that our sense of

history is itself conditioned and made acute by our standing in a historical situation where the possibilities of decisive action (and so of human freedom) have been opened to us: our sense of the increased determinism of human personality thus perhaps also increases our appreciation of the decisive way in which its freedom can assert itself. Marx, the great discoverer of economic determinism, is also the prophet of revolutionary action. The historical sense of medieval man, to take the extreme contrasting example, with its single and definite drama of human history, is simple, naive, almost non-existent, bounded, as it was, by the limits of a feudal society, by a fairly static alignment of classes; whereas every modern thinker faces both forward and back, the conflicts within our present society laying open the possibilities of actions oriented towards radically different futures for mankind.

To bring this back to the subject of autobiography: if the autobiography has now become a form with great philosophical possibilities (as Henry Adams recognized, though he did not perhaps altogether fulfill them), then we shall also expect from this *modern* autobiographer a vision commensurate with our own complicated feelings about history and personality.

These remarks are amply illustrated by George Santayana's recent autobiography, *Persons and Places*. If this gracious little book hardly realizes the possibilities indicated for modern autobiography it does nevertheless make quite clear that these possibilities exist, that the particular quality of Santayana's philosophizing is what it is for a number of reasons which were not of his choice, as well as for several on which he might possibly have taken a different course. It makes a good comment on the whole philosophic career, and, examining it as such, we may perhaps produce some incidental elucidation of the general remarks with which we began.

Several qualities seem to recommend Santayana for the role of the serious autobiographer. A philosopher of importance, he has also written a fairly successful novel, a pair of accomplishments that suggest the combination of speculative ability and literary imagination which the genre demands. We can hardly imagine Bertrand Russell, for example, approaching the autobiographical form with equal chances of success; we would probably get a history of opinions and series of witty anecdotes. This is in fact the kind of subject-matter to which Santayana's mind and temperament seem best suited: the criticism of persons and ideas, taken together, a genre in which some of his best writing has been done, as in his *Character and*

Opinion in the United States and Winds of Dogma. His imagination, being sensuous and concrete, needs the control of a concrete subject-matter; when he pursues the idea alone, he gets lost.

He even seems to be striking the right key at the very beginning with a statement that sounds quite remarkable coming from him:

"Now my little cockle-shell and the cockle-shells of the rest of my family, and of the whole middle and upper class (except the unsinkable politicians) were being borne along more or less merrily on the surface currents of a treacherous social revolution." (p. 2)

The reader reviewing the whole career will probably come back to this opening passage with a number of unanswered questions. What is this social revolution referred to? How did the politicians, least of anybody, escape it? And how and where, if at all, does Santayana's own career, his fifty years of philosophizing, relate to it? The word "revolution" threatens just now, it seems, to degenerate out of all sense; we have the revolution of this, that and the other, tomorrow's book bringing us tomorrow's prophet with his absolutely new decision about today's "revolution of our time": in an age of accelerated change people are so dazzled by the transformations in the texture of daily life that they become blind to the unchanged social fabric beneath. But, in the strict sense of the term, there was at least one revolution through which Santayana lived; which he might still observe taking place about him in Boston during his youth; which had already laid a withering finger on the social class of the American relatives with whom he lived, the Sturgis family, once prosperous merchants of Boston: industrial, and eventually also finance, capital dispossessed the old merchant capital class of New England, whose culture, deflowered, quickly became extinct. Santayana observed this decease of the New England culture; he has analyzed certain aspects of it shrewdly in his *Genteel Tradition at Bay*, and also in the present work he observes sharply its wistful lingering on in the person of Professor Charles Eliot Norton. But this cannot be the revolution on which Santayana's own cockle-shell has continued to float; his fortunes, having escaped that revolution, have been bobbing along now for some time on the surface of a much wider and deeper upheaval. And it is against the stream of this wider upheaval—"revolution," if you will, but whose revolution is in the process of being born, and then maybe not—that we have to see this life, and eventually also weigh the reputation. Has Santayana really grasped his story in such terms? Here, alas, his opening statement merely announces a theme which is never developed. Yet the statement remains remark-

able, even though we doubt that the knowledge behind it is real. We find it remarkable to hear Santayana, whose life has been a history of withdrawal, connect himself and his career, however fragmentarily, with his time and place, with the compulsions of history.

But perhaps also the development of such a theme would be too ambitious and exhausting an effort for a man of eighty years. This is an old man turning the pages of an album; Santayana himself indicates the adequacy of his title: he is writing down what he remembers of a long life, and these memories are, he says, nearly all of faces and places, sometimes quite isolated. It is an occasion for public regret that Santayana has come so late to his autobiography. Perhaps he has been wasting some of his time during the last two decades, since the labors expended upon other works might have been sufficient to realize the full philosophic possibilities in the autobiography. *Scepticism and Animal Faith* introduced in 1923 an outline of a philosophic system; all that was needed to complete this system was a single volume postscript, but instead the next fifteen years were to see him occupied with the four subsequent volumes of the *Realms of Being*, which add very little, if anything, to his philosophic reputation, and where we get a Santayana rambling and thinning out. And as for the novel of 1936, *The Last Puritan*—that labor might have been more profitably spent on undisguised autobiography. Could his invention as a novelist, for example, be equal to creating the curious marriage of his mother and father that we find in the autobiography? Santayana has come a little too late to this rich autobiographical material. The present work carries us only through Harvard college; the years of Santayana's intellectual maturity, richer in ideas and personal contacts, still lie before us. True, this is meant as an installment and ends with a promise of more to come, but the uncertainties of authorship, those ever haunting furies, are compounded at a fearsome rate for a writer of eighty years. And even if he does get around to writing of them, these events will hardly get the treatment they might have been given ten or twenty years ago.

Edmund Wilson has already ranked the book beside two of the most famous of modern autobiographies, Yeats's *Autobiographies* and Adams's *The Education of Henry Adams*; but this comparison is somewhat out of proportion, to say the least, and serves in fact only to throw into relief the relative slightness of Santayana's work. This is not the re-enactment of the solemn drama and ritual of personality which in Yeats's work is made the vehicle for a great poetic

vision of experience. Nor is Santayana, like Adams, attempting to set his personal history in contrast to the history of his age, and so to give that age its particular place in history. In contrast with these writers Santayana is, to repeat, but turning graciously the pages of an album. The contrast with Adams is particularly illuminating, partly because they both touch upon somewhat similar themes in American life, but perhaps chiefly because the sense of history which makes Adams's work important is a quality which Santayana's mind has conspicuously lacked. What lies behind his extraordinary dislike of Hegel if not a hatred of historicism? No doubt Hegel, one of the wildest of the wild men in the history of philosophy, does deserve every one of Santayana's censures; but we cannot forget either that Hegel in giving philosophic expression to that particular sense of history which was born in the early nineteenth century was actually bringing something new (and in its way decisive) into philosophy; and he himself was to bear great fruit in his opposition: without Hegel, neither Marx nor Kierkegaard. So that what we are today we are partly because of Hegel: the modern mind (if we have one) is historical. That is one reason why Santayana, even in his best writing, seems—like his style, so consciously a "style," so carefully weighted and balanced, through which the irregular and living voice never seems to break—remote from us.

As compared with Adams, there are, of course, special reasons for this lack in Santayana. Adams was a Yankee of the old ruling stock, and his isolation from America and his time became the resentment of the heir being displaced. Santayana, on the other hand, was a complete outsider from the start; a Spaniard brought up in Puritan and genteel Boston, who cannot suppress even at his present age, an amazingly romantic sigh of regret that he did not receive his education in Spain, which would have been empty, he admits, but at least full of gallantry and poetry! Did the Genteel Tradition, which he despised and criticized so sharply, nevertheless really imprison him? The idea is tempting; we need not support it here beyond citing one large example; his *Reason in Society*, which, if it is not exactly the Genteel Tradition in politics, is as near this as an intelligence so otherwise politically sceptical as Santayana's could come. The society it deals with belongs to the academic cloister and not to the world of 1905, when it appeared. Moreover, in his previous writings and the present autobiography the observations of American life are drawn from the middle-class surface or from within the academic pale; occasionally even, we feel that some of these perceptions are a little stock. We are really surprised when we read in the autobio-

graphy that Santayana at Harvard knew William Randolph Hearst, as if an unsuspected door suddenly flew open for a moment on the rowdy and vigorous figures in the household that our host has so far succeeded in making us forget were there all the time. Here, if the philosopher had seen it, was a character full of rich significance beyond the circle of academic Harvard or of the Sturgises of Boston, a symptom of a different America in process of growth, the vast inchoate continent forming into a society, towards which a philosophic interest in the Realm of Matter, if not his historic sense, should have drawn him. Santayana remarks somewhere that Henry James conquered the Genteel Tradition by understanding it. Certainly Santayana himself shrewdly saw through this Tradition, or as much of it as concerned him; but there is the difference, that while James went abroad in passionate search of another community, Santayana carried abroad his isolation, nursing the illusion of an Olympian detachment above and outside his time. Here—if we may be pardoned the clinical terms—the patient's libido, directed towards the trauma, perpetuates it as an imago.

The clinical terms remind us that Santayana has written an essay on Freud and also suggest that we shall not succeed in explaining his remoteness from his time without being tempted into the purely personal parts of his autobiography. Unfortunately his essay on Freud is pretty thin, touching on one or two metaphysical issues and leaving the clinical aspects aside; had it been more studious, we might have in the autobiography a more analytic eye turned towards parents and childhood. For the relations between his mother and father are extraordinary and fascinating, although Santayana,—just where, it seems, they are rising to the point of being understandable—manages, whether deliberately or not, to hang a veil. His mother was forty, his father fifty, when they married, and the reasons for this marriage were, Santayana says, very obscure and perhaps did not exist. His father, a country gentleman of very modest means, an amateur in painting, a liberal in politics, his liberalism being a pale and genteel descendant of French Jacobinism, is altogether a type to be recognized out of Spanish life and literature. His mother is a more complex and marvelous figure, who just barely comes across in the book: a thoroughly forceful, coldly passionate, determined, practical and yet romantic engine, she seems to have possessed both her husbands. One gathers, for example, that it was she who courted and was responsible for this second marriage. She wrote poetry to his father of which, we rather regret, Santayana has included no quotation.

At the age of eight Santayana left his father in Spain and came to live with his mother in Boston, in the bosom of the Sturgis family, into which she had entered by her first marriage. What were the relations between mother and son in this environment foreign to both? Here the veil is drawn: the mother is presented in her own person but not the mother in relation to her son. But where the veil is drawn, the reader, curious and fascinated, is led to his own conjectures. One notices, for example, in this book written by a man of eighty, in which Santayana's habitual sharpness and arrogance are mitigated almost everywhere into an unusual tenderness, that in writing of his father he cannot escape letting creep in here and there a certain note of *exasperation*. And one is also led to speculate on the possible connection between this self-possessed and possessing woman who possessed two husbands and the fact that no other woman appears so far in a sexual relation to the author although his narrative carries him thus far through college into post-graduate study.

Apart from such deeper and more universal regions of influence where we must in any case speculate, one detects here and there traces of the parents in the child. Santayana seems to have some of the peculiarly Spanish characteristics of the mother: the sombre pride and arrogance, the self-sufficiency and self-possession; and some of her cold energy and determination too, considering the solid body of work he has behind him. It is natural, on the other hand, that the traces of his father should appear in the more articulate, external and casual aspects of his personality. In his constant profession of detachment; in the continued disavowal of the drudgery of the professional scholar—he tells us here that he has always looked on philosophy chiefly as his own peculiar medium of art, he has loved it for the poetry of it; and, generally, in the life he has led since leaving America we are reminded altogether of the refined gentleman, the amateur in retirement: his father.

It is not any illicit intent to compromise the philosophy by the autobiography that leads us grubbing into the philosopher's private life. The intervention of the personality in the philosophy is something Santayana himself has accepted and indeed exploited as very eloquent rhetoric. What he believes as a philosopher is given a deep and moving resonance by being represented as an outcome of the natural man: being what he was, he could not believe otherwise, and opposing systems were either self-deception or artificial pose. But of what is the natural man an outcome? "Nothing in the psychic life," Freud says, "is arbitrary or undetermined." The philosopher who spins his dialectic was once the child that whimpered; which recognition may

beget claptrap or shed light, depending on the sense of fact with which we use it; and will also, conceivably, be more applicable to Santayana than to some other philosophers. In any case it seems no accident that the autobiography has few surprises for us, that it merely summarizes the human person that had already taken shape through the philosophy. And this dualism or unity, whichever it be, of the human person and the philosopher seems aptly summarized towards the end of the book in a passing remark, which may now, accordingly, be left with the reader as our own summary.

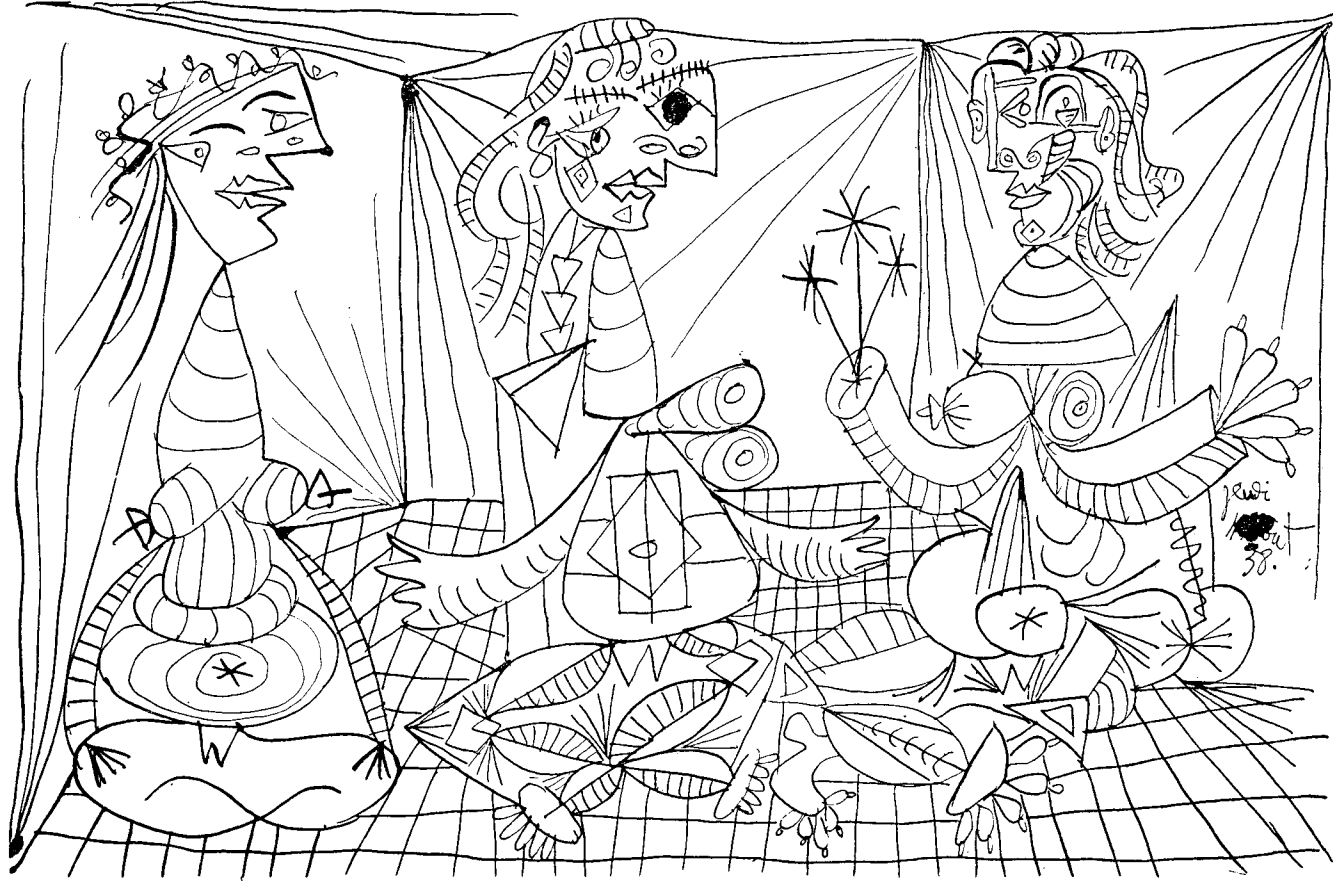
The remark comes apropos of a discussion with Josiah Royce while Santayana was still an undergraduate at Harvard College. The relations between the pupil and his mentors, Royce and William James, were perhaps as decisive for Santayana's intellectual development as the familial relations of his childhood for the development of the man, and like these latter leave our curiosity on some points unappeased. Santayana's debt to these men he has acknowledged in two essays which may be, so far as I know, the most brilliant pieces of writing ever done on James and Royce; but which also slightly repel us by a certain underlying tone of cold condescension. But Royce gets some redress at last: the kindness with which he is now remembered contrasts sharply with that rather cold treatment he has been given in the earlier essay. This may be part of the general tenderness of the autobiography, the softened lines that an old man's memory sees, when the antagonisms generated out of academic competition have long since blown over; but the change of tone may also signify—what is more important—a newer and probably more adequate evaluation of Royce's importance. This discussion in which Royce appears is about Spinoza, whom Santayana wants to present as a very early and decisive interest. We may agree that this subject is a significant cue to his development though we may doubt that the influence has been as decisive as he thinks, since he has always seen in Spinoza only as much as he wanted to see, which is a good deal less than the whole; the significance may reside rather in the fact that this lifelong devotion to a daring speculative metaphysician like Spinoza amounts in itself to a very important philosophical perception on Santayana's part that his own naturalism is as much a speculative philosophy as the various speculative philosophies of idealism or theism, which it is meant to compete with and displace; a point on which a good many other modern naturalists are hardly as frank. The discussion leads him to remark of Royce:

“Royce had a powerful and learned mind, and it was always profit-

able if not pleasant to listen to him. . . . To listen was profitable because his comfortless dissatisfaction with every possible idea opened vistas and disturbed a too easy dogmatism."

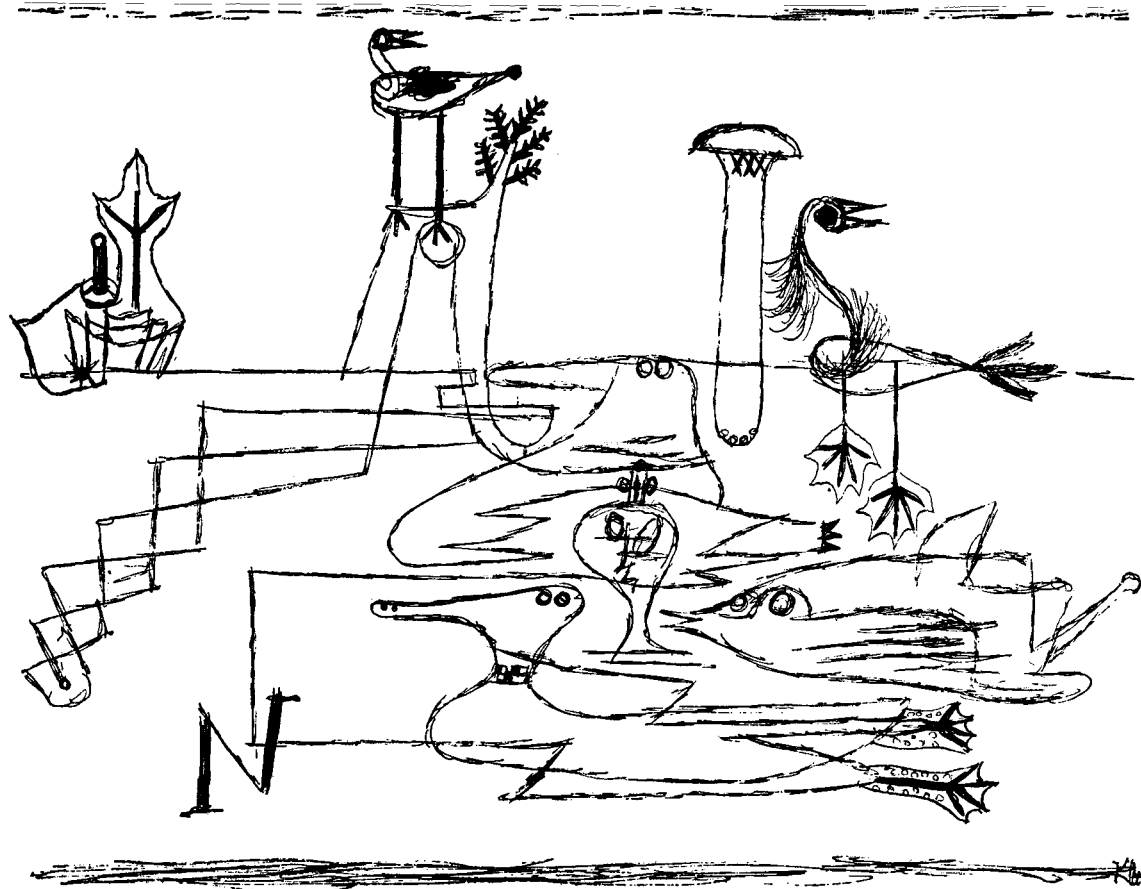
It is not apparent that Santayana has here incidentally produced a very significant statement about himself until we stop to contrast this intellectual restlessness of Royce with Santayana's own assiduously worn mask of classic and Olympian serenity. Then we realize that this "comfortless dissatisfaction" with ideas is precisely the great, the indispensable quality which Santayana himself has lacked as a philosopher.

A mind without restlessness, without intellectual *anxiety*, reposing easily in its doctrines with assumptions that have remained virtually stationary over a lifetime—such is the resultant image which prolonged exposure to him leaves us. And is it not clear that this is a deficiency less of the intelligence itself than of the human psyche enveloping the intelligence? Santayana's intelligence has always shown itself as acute as it needed to be for his purposes; if we are repelled by the superior tone towards James and Royce, we also feel a real superiority in the mind that could put so sharp and surgical a finger to the weak points in his teachers. But where James and Royce belong to their subject, this possibly superior mind was blocked from a fruition equal to its powers: to become a permanent reminder (should we need one) of how delicate and pliable a growth the mind is in relation to its total human soil, so that we could almost wish every important philosopher the chastening experience of writing his autobiography.



PICASSO DESSIN A LA PLUME MOUGINS 5 AOUT 1938. 44,5 X 67,5 %, APPARTIENT A L'ARTISTE.

Reproduction Contributed by Nierendorf Gallery, New York City



PAUL KLEE ISLANDS OF THE BIRDS PEN DRAWING 1921 22.3 X 28.7 CM.
Reproduction Contributed by Nierendorf Gallery, New York City

Stravinsky Now

NICOLAS NABOKOV

To Jacques Maritain

THE SKY was perfectly clear when Stravinsky asked his driving companion to turn on the windshield wiper. The composer's eyes were fixed on the pendulum of the wiper as they drove through the blue California hills, and not even on returning home did he explain his behavior. The story repeated itself the next day and the next. Stravinsky would telephone his friend, ask to be taken for a drive and, once in the car, would request that the windshield wiper be turned on even if the day was fair and clear. For a long while he would tensely watch the motion of the pendulum over the yellowish surface of the windshield. The time came, however, when he asked his friend to stop the car so that he might make some notations. Afterwards he explained in his usual ceremonious manner: "You see, I was puzzled by the irregularity of the motion of your wiper. It took me some time to determine the nature of this irregularity, to discover the pattern of its rhythm, and then to find the precise way of putting it down on paper. Now I have found it—here it is!"

Of the many true and apocryphal anecdotes told about Stravinsky this latest one is to me exceptionally revealing. Whether it really happened or not is beside the point; of interest is the fact that such an anecdote is being told and repeated in musical circles. For it points both to what Stravinsky as a musician and as a person means to his colleagues and to certain tendencies by which he has been increasingly swayed in recent years. It may be said, too, that the various reactions to this little story are a very good measure of the response to Stravinsky's later work.

Probably the most widespread view of Stravinsky's music is expressed by the skeptical question so frequently heard: "Do you really think that Stravinsky has fulfilled his promise?"—implying of course a negative answer. People who hold this view generally contend that since Stravinsky has ceased to use Russian folk themes his music has suffered a steady decline. They believe that the presence of national characteristics is not only an asset but a necessary virtue of musical

art. Music should represent distinct features of this or that nationality and in a very complete sense reflect the "tone color" of a national culture. This belief naturally leads to the conclusion that Stravinsky's interest in the revival of the eighteenth-century tradition, its form and technique, is nothing but a perverse intellectual aberration, designed to camouflage the decline of his creative powers, his loss of self-confidence and national deracination. His latest works, it is said, are composed in a vacuum, being unrelated to the general trends of musical development in this period; these "mechanically calculated" works do not in the least respond to or describe the state of mind of his fellow men in these chaotic years of successive catastrophes and emotional tribulations. All of which contributes, of course, to the idea of Stravinsky as an artist shut up in a "Californian" ivory tower.

It goes without saying that people who air such views had at one time or another fallen in love with earlier compositions of Stravinsky's (chiefly *The Firebird* and *Petroushka*), and it is because of this love of the "Russian" Stravinsky that they cannot accept the so-called "neo-classical" denationalized Stravinsky. He is accused of being a "cultural renegade," of having rejected the great traditions of his motherland, the Rimskys, Moussorgskys, Borodins, for the sake of mechanical tricks, "freaklike instrumentation," "jazz rhythms," "self-satisfied play (*herumspielerei*) with trivial melodies of doubtful origin," and the whole bag of tricks invented during "the Parisian pastiche years" of the twenties.

Another opinion, held by considerably fewer people, goes part of the way with Stravinsky in his recent transformation but stops short of certain pieces whose "classical aridity" and "retrospective nature" it does not wish to comprehend. Here the irritation gives way to a feeling of bewilderment and perplexity. "I see what he is doing," says a critic of this school, "but what is the meaning of this adaptation to our modern musical terminology of the various traditions of the past? What is the reason for this retrospection?" It seemed plausible to these critics that at a certain time in his life Stravinsky should have "discovered" the "classics" and that in connection with classical subjects such as *Oedipus Rex*, *Apollo*, *Persephone*, he should have used a kind of stylistic analogue in the form of a stylized classical idiom. However, to crystallize a whole style within the terms of such a retrospective dogma seems to them absurd and quite contrary to what Stravinsky's work had been taken to mean by an entire generation of musicians. For to most of us this composer's music had meant a complete overturn of outmoded rules of musical writing, and a process of liberating the musician from the habits of past harmonic systems. Now this same

man has come to negate the principle of revolutionary freedom in art—the very principle of which he had been considered such a forceful exponent only some twenty years ago!

Still another serious accusation might be phrased thus: "In most of Stravinsky's recent compositions that part which formerly was a valuable experiment in the field of rhythm has now degenerated and become a mere restatement of a number of rhythmical 'habits' or formulae, based upon certain observations of the nature of rhythmical irregularities (such as over-abundant syncopation or shifts of irregular measure-patterns) and their psychological effect upon the listener." For this and other reasons Stravinsky's new contrapuntal style, although transparent and orthodox, is characterized by some critics as pedantic and uninspired. The harmonic language itself, as developed by Stravinsky, is in part, so they say, "wilfully reactionary" in its abundant use of old-fashioned chord formations and trivial chord sequences. These same critics also maintain that into this peaceful and grandmotherly atmosphere Stravinsky introduces, apparently without reason, certain modern chord structures of the most elaborate kind that sting like wasps and burn out the inside of one's ears. Is not this composer, then, indulging himself in a kind of "artistic gambling" with trivial matters, as shown, for example, in his preoccupation with stylistic commonplaces and banal tunes gleaned from the musical manuscripts of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries? Even Stravinsky's mastery as orchestrator seems to have vanished. Gone are the "beautiful lush tone colors" of the *Rites of Spring*; even the daring orchestral experiments of his *Histoire du Soldat* or of his *First Piano Concerto* have given way to ascetic restraint and a transparency bordering on aridity. The only elements that remain are the extreme instrumental registers and that percussive quality of the instruments which gives to most of Stravinsky's scores a rather annoying crackling and whistling sound.

The views sketched above are clearly the views of the majority of "music lovers" in this country; and I would venture to suggest that things do not stand very differently abroad. Stravinsky is, in fact, a very lonely man, in a sense even more so than his older contemporary, the father of atonality, Arnold Schoenberg. Since the beginning of the war, Stravinsky has lived and worked in this country, where he has preferred the West Coast to the humming life of the East. He has written a number of works of greater and lesser importance, and has enjoyed the honors of the podium as conductor, pianist, and teacher of "musical poetics" at Harvard University. Yet his influence is somehow on the wane, for despite all the performances of his music his

later work is little known and rarely played. A great composition, his *Symphony in C* written in 1940, has to my knowledge never been thoroughly discussed and is comparatively seldom heard.

The question that arises in one's mind is whether Stravinsky is not, after all, a good Russian composer with Parisian overtones who has now outlived his time. But what if, after a serious and careful study of his latest compositions, we should come to the conclusion that his "artistic ideology" makes sense and that his new music is consistent with his former genius, that it is quite as "radical" as it was at the time of the *Rites of Spring*? If this should be our conclusion, then we would be forced to admit that something has gone wrong with ourselves and that our present "state of music" is indeed a low one, reflecting the general levelling of culture and *embourgeoisement* of society which the modern world is now experiencing.

To understand what Stravinsky has been trying to do one must, first, inquire into the nature and aim of musical art and, second, into the meaning and value of what is called "tradition" in music. Only thus is it possible to measure Stravinsky's achievements. Fortunately, the composer has himself given coherent and complete answers to these questions both in his autobiography and in his admirable booklet, *Poétique Musicale*, which is a collection of six lectures delivered at Harvard two years ago.

Music, for Stravinsky, is neither a language in which we express our emotions nor an alternate means of describing our environment or stating philosophical and moral concepts. Music neither teaches nor expresses anything at all. "It is the only domain," Stravinsky writes, "where man realizes the present and orders the elements of sound and of time." Thus music is primarily and essentially a structural organization devoid of any conceptual meaning "except that which is implicit in its very structure." Stravinsky considers that "the *raison d'être* of music is in no way conditioned by the power of expression. If, as is nearly always the case, music seems to express something, this is but an illusion. . . . This is simply an additional [or superimposed] element which we assume in music through silent and inveterate agreement. It is imposed upon music as an 'etiquette,' a protocol, in short a *tendue* which by habit or unconsciousness we have confused with its essence." Yet at the same time "the phenomenon of music is given to us" as a kind of mean term or "order" between ourselves and the element of time. Once the "construction" of "sound—time" is achieved, it arouses in us "an emotion of a very special

character which has nothing in common with current sensations and our reactions to everyday life."

It would seem that this point of view allows for the dismissal of all music attempting to describe objects or to "inscribe" any sort of mood or impression. Actually this is not the case. Stravinsky simply says that the descriptive aspect of music is secondary, superimposed and accidental—the product of convention. This can best be exemplified by the following story. A pianist-composer of the nineteenth century was playing one of his "nature loving" compositions to a visiting maharajah in London. At a certain moment in the composition a trill in the high register was supposed to represent the "love song" (what the French call *les ebats amoureux*) of a nightingale. After the piece was over someone asked the maharajah how he liked the "description of the nightingale." He seemed very astonished and replied "Oh, I though he was imitating an electric bell. . . ." What to us was the "conventional nineteenth-century nightingale," was to the "progress" minded maharajah an expression of the composer's enthusiasm for the latest electric invention.

To Stravinsky music "makes stable the category of the present." It measures the instants of the "flow," ordering and fixing them in the forms of a sound structure which, in a variation on Goethe's words, one could call "the petrified present." Thus music is primarily concerned with measure and those parts or tools of measurement we call meter and rhythm—the only means of providing us with an image of that third category of time—"the present"—of stabilizing it in a beautiful and comprehensible form and thus opening to us the possibility of understanding the nature of time and timelessness.

Stravinsky's conceptions impose great obligations upon a composer. If music is to measure time in sounds and to give a picture thereof, then its craftsmanship, its technique, must be impeccable and the speculative powers of the "artisan-inventor" (as Eric Satie used to call the composer) must be exceptionally sharp, well-trained and on a high level of consciousness. The problems of craft, form and style become the paramount problems of music; the duality of form and content disappears and the unity of the work is established anew. The form and style are both the "outside" and "inside" of the work, and in order to understand it there is no need to search for literary meanings, which are at best only an analogy or metaphor of what really occurs in the composition.

All this leads directly to the second and perhaps most important problem—the problem of tradition. Here perhaps lies the key to the

very nature of Stravinsky's art, its intentions and the position it should (and certainly will) occupy in musical history. In the light of what has been said above, tradition can in no way be identified with the mere transmission of certain formal conventions from generation to generation. If form, style and technique in a work of music are its very "being," its "inside" and "outside"—whole and indivisible—then there must be a special significance, a special virtue attached to those patterns which are discovered by successive generations of artistic craftsmen. Tradition is thus a kind of artistic capital inherited by each generation—the one sure guaranty of the continuity of art.

If this is the real meaning of tradition, then everything which breaks away from it is sooner or later destined to perish from lack of nourishment—from lack of terms and symbols. Tradition is sometimes spoken of as a force that fetters the adventurous spirit of the "artisan-inventor," a force whose political equivalent is tyranny. But this is a superficial idea, for it takes tradition to be something quite different from the living symbols and patterns of our culture. It confounds tradition with certain habits of a dead scholasticism. Often, also, the creative musician quite candidly conceals the operations of tradition within his art, hiding behind the flamboyant terms, "revolution" or "overthrowing of tradition." But revolution, artistically speaking, means one thing: the turn of a cycle in the life of tradition.

There are times, however, when disruptive elements from without enter the life of tradition and refuse to be assimilated by it. This is exactly the case in the history of nineteenth-century music. The extreme and, at times, perverse interest of that century in folk art, the deification of the natural, rural man and the resulting insistence on ethnographic and geographic truthfulness—that is, the authenticity of every bit of folk art—introduced elements of various national tonal systems and melodic and rhythmic idioms foreign to the Western tradition of music.

There was a time in the nineteenth century (in Russia, for example) when a composer's stature was determined by his ability to reproduce the folk art of his country. Inevitably, this had a bad effect on the life of Western musical tradition. For nationalism, particularism and even, to a certain extent, individualism are diametrically opposed to its very essence, which is universal and supra-individual. Here again, this does not mean that a composer of a particular nation should not bring with him his national memories. But he should always remember that folk art must be transfigured in order permanently to enter the whole body of tradition.

Nationalism is only one instance of the many disturbing elements

which have been attacking Western musical tradition since the beginning of the nineteenth century. Among others were the *Sturm und Drang* of Romanticism with its great emotional upheaval; the chimera of Wagner's *Gesamtkunstwerk* with its absurd scheme of *leitmotive*, and the general "spirit of the confessional" which pervaded the arts in the nineteenth century, producing in music a torrent of confessions and searchings in lush rhetoric and faulty technique.

In a very conscious and methodical way, Stravinsky attempts to pick up the many loose threads of tradition which were abandoned during the last hundred years. He wishes not so much to begin anew, as to understand anew what tradition implies. Herein, I believe, lies the chief importance of Stravinsky for our time; in the measure that he achieves this understanding he serves the most urgent need of the art of music.

How is Stravinsky able to achieve this integration? Primarily it is through his miraculously pure craftsmanship, developed over long years of "speculative training," self-schooling, self-discipline and artistic contemplation. Every note of his lucid and admirably exact scores (and this becomes truer with every new composition) sits on its line or space like a well behaved and well groomed child in a classroom. It is immediately evident that all the calculations which surround his inventive process have been carried out with the most scrupulous precision and conscientiousness.

Another reason for his success lies in the fact that he understands that tradition is a process of continuous renewal. It is a living thing, eternally reborn, unlike musicology, for instance. Many composers commit the error of understanding tradition to mean a kind of "musicological-historical" revival and write pieces in accordance with seventeenth or eighteenth-century conventions. The result is that most of these "modern" fugues, passacaglias and classical symphonies, written under the banner of neo-classicism or "the new polyphonic style" are just so much academic dust. In this case the Soviet critics are quite right in discarding such music as "absurd formalism."

I remember the irritation among the older gentlemen of the Parisian public (and, alas, quite a number of otherwise intelligent younger musicians) produced by the first performance of Stravinsky's *First Piano Concerto*. They were shocked at this "Bach revival in modern clothes"; it seemed arrogance to them to touch the immortal memories of Bach's style. If Stravinsky had written a polite classical symphony in the conventions of the eighteenth century, they would probably have been delighted by it, just as the American public is

delighted by the Classical Symphony of Prokofiev, which, to that composer himself, is only a kind of joke.

This is not the proper place for a very detailed technical analysis of Stravinsky's latest works. Let me here state only a few significant characteristics of these works by way of illustrating the points I was making.

As I have said, sometime in the twenties Stravinsky ceased using Russian themes in his music. At that time very few people understood the reason for this change. Yet, in the light of what has been said, the reason was quite consistent with Stravinsky's character. In part, he must have discovered that these materials were not sufficiently adaptable to the tradition; but, chiefly, he must have observed that he, himself, had well-nigh exhausted them. He has used Russian themes in all his major works, deriving them from all kinds of sources. What more was there to do, unless he wished to repeat himself over and over again as did (and still do) so many composers of the nationalist schools. This, to Stravinsky, was obviously an unacceptable prospect and he abandoned the use of "Russian themes" for good.

It is for this that he was most severely criticized. The general view of a Russian and what was expected from a Russian embraced, as Stravinsky once put it, "troika, vodka, isba, balalaika, boyar, samovar, nitchevo and even bolshevism." If a Russian refused to live up to these expectations, something obviously was the matter with him; he was uprooted, he refused to be a Russian, in short, he was a lost man. I am sure that much of the resentment against Stravinsky's new music, perhaps even the core of it, is the result of such mental habits.

Since 1924 Stravinsky has developed a style of polyphonic writing which, contrary to the usual modern polyphony or "free counterpoint" is concise, logical, economical and, in the deepest sense, authentic. The origins of this style can be found in such works of the so-called "Russian" period as *Noces* or *The Fox*; and, as a matter of fact, the usual division of Stravinsky's music into the "Russian" and the "neo-classic" periods is, to a careful observer, of no particular significance or importance. The progress of his art has been very gradual, and there never was a break between any two distinct periods. His preoccupations and the sources of his materials may change, but the craftsmanship is always there, and it is recognizable throughout any material or any orchestral combination he may use. This unified technique makes for a lofty and transparent style whose rationality is truly unique nowadays. Not since the masters of the eighteenth century has there been such perfect unity of style in music.

But it is in the sphere of rhythm that Stravinsky has made his most important discoveries. If one looks back at the great cycles of musical history it becomes clear that two of these cycles have been completed and a third has just begun. The first of these, the longest in time, could be termed the melodic cycle or the period of investigation into the nature of melody. Beginning in the ancient Mediterranean cultures and continuing through its first blossoming in the psalmodic chant of the early Christian Church, it reached its apogee and flourished in the works of the great masters of the Renaissance. From then on one could say that all the secrets of the nature of melody had been uncovered, and melody, as a clear and distinct principle, became part of our conscious heritage. When this first cycle was about to close, another started, born of the exigencies and contingencies of the former. This second cycle was the harmonic one, during which a thorough investigation of chords, chord patterns and chord relations was carried out, developing a knowledge of such principles as key, tonality and their inter-relations. All of the seventeenth, eighteenth, nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were spent in the investigation of harmony and the formal problems arising from it. The nineteenth century certainly would have seen the greatest advance in harmonic music since the Renaissance, were it not for those disruptive, extra-musical factors which undermined its inner unity and coherence.

A new cycle has just begun, and it seems it will be occupied with the investigation of rhythm. It will be a rhythmical cycle, and not, as some musicians believe, a cycle of further exploration into the abstract possibilities of the harmonic field such as atonality or "quarter tone music." Stravinsky is, in my opinion, the first great protagonist of this new cycle. As with Monteverde in the Renaissance, one part of Stravinsky's art is firmly entrenched in the harmonic cycle, but the other, the new part, is concerned with the third cycle, or our "new world of rhythm." This is why the story told at the beginning of this essay is so significant. One of the principles by which Stravinsky carries out his investigations into the nature of rhythm is in the reduction of every musical measure to one monometrical unit or metrical cell. This can be seen in any one of his compositions, but perhaps most clearly in his latest works such as his *Symphony*, the *Concert Dances*, *Dumbarton Oaks* and his most recent piece, *Ode*. Look at any one of his bars and you will find that it is not the measure closed in by bar lines (as it would be in Mozart, for example) but the monometrical unit of the measure, the single beat which determines the life of his musical organism. Observe the precise calculation of his rests, like breaths of

silence filled with unheard, unsounding music, which determine the measure, the relations and the proportions of the piece. Observe, too, the well balanced lengths of his chords in a slow movement as, for example, the epilogue of his *Symphony*, and the frequent and absolutely necessary changes of time (the bane of all conductors) caused by the reduction of the metrical tissue to the organic cell.

What is the purpose of this reduction? It is a prerequisite for any investigation into rhythm, rhythmical invention, or even creative rhythmical play. In a crude form, jazz offers the best evidence of this same necessity, reducing itself to the repetition of a "one" beat in order to set up a rhythm. On the basis of this reduction, Stravinsky begins to construct a new rhythmical world. He shifts the rhythmical units, lengthens phrases, cuts them again, opposes them to one another and achieves a complex and amazingly subtle rhythmical counterpoint. He changes the place of accents and inflections and finally brings forth a rhythmic work of art with astounding coherence of parts. Yet, to make this rhythmical exploration distinctly "visible" or "audible" he must, of necessity, base it upon melodic and harmonic structures of a familiar, habitual order. It is only when operating on familiar ground that you can judge the nature of your operation. In short, Stravinsky uses "other people's" melodic idioms and "old fashioned" harmonic chord structures out of a kind of rhythmical necessity. He has no need and no time for the invention of new melodic patterns. As all great masters, he has no scruples about using the melodies preserved in our cultural treasury. This, I believe, is the only reasonable answer one can give to those who accuse Stravinsky of melodic sterility and dependence upon other people's melodic inventions.

In closing, let me point out that one of the greatest achievements of Stravinsky, from this viewpoint, is his new *Symphony in C*. This work, to my mind, achieves something which has never previously been done in such a fashion but which, nevertheless, is music's natural aim. What I mean is a kind of "perception of timelessness." This perception comes to one most clearly in the epilogue of the symphony. When the music begins to quiet down and the various rhythms, as it were, return to their elements, the divisions of time become longer, quieter and more serene; large, soft, subtly measured chords move slowly on the horizon of vanishing musical time. These are the shadows of the "present" which Stravinsky is about to cease measuring. A broad, noble melody which has been one of the main instruments of this exquisite measurement, slowly returns to its modal center, its

root, and the whole body of this ideal musical being acquires a serenity, a motionless beauty.

It is as if the old Kronos, having been measured by the mind of a great Diviner and thus having received a face and a shape understandable to us humans—that shape which we call a work of music—were to dissolve himself, vanish, and in departing, give us a glimpse of that peace, that order and beauty which live above our time, our works of art. In the confusion of our era, of our thought and of our art, with their succession of destruction, waste and despair, the clear and steady aims of an art like Stravinsky's should give us courage and hope.

FRANCE

From the Gibbet

My human brothers who live after me,
See how I hang. My bones eat through the skin
And flesh they carried here upon the chin
And lipping clutch at their cupidity;
Now here, now there, the starling and the sea
Gull ravel the groined eyeballs of my sin
Of death: more beaks of birds than needles in
The fathoms of the Bayeux tapestry
Where chivalry baptized itself in blood.
My brothers, if I call you brothers, see:
The blood of Abel rising from the dead
Sticks to your heads and to my hands. What good
Are *Lebensraum* and bread to Abel, dead
And rotten on the cross-beams of this Tree?

ROBERT LOWELL

Art Chronicle

The Bottles Were O'Donovan's

TO JUDGE solely by his paintings, Thomas Eakins must have been a dull man. A wall label under a photograph in a current exhibition of his work at M. Knoedler & Company, New York, reads: "Eakins in his Chestnut Street Studio. Taken while O'Donovan was working there. The bottles were O'Donovan's. Eakins was temperate in all things." And the paintings and drawings at the recent Centennial Exhibition of his work in Philadelphia show that temperance was his vice.

He had evidently no interest in emotional expression. Color had no seduction for him. He was an artisan without confidence in his free-hand drawing. He put no trust in an intuitive placing of forms on a canvas. Where there was a likelihood of even a slight compositional complexity, he would make mechanical drawings of the ground and the side and end elevations, as may be seen in the current exhibition at Knoedler's. It is true that in his later years he did not rely to the same extent on such preliminary perspective studies. At that time portraits had become his principal product and in general they did not call for such preparations. But even then, in large pictures, his biographer Mr. Lloyd Goodrich tells us, "he still laid out the ground-plan and the regular-shaped objects in perspective; in the case of a seated figure the floor and the chair would be constructed first."*

He was a painter with little feeling for the canvas as a whole. This is immediately apparent from the lack of unity between the background of *The Swimming Hole* and the stiffly modelled figures; or between the perfunctory backdrop of *The Fairman Rogers Four-in-Hand* and the horses and carriage placed before it. Or again, in a less ambitious piece such as *Baby at Play*, we can see this even more clearly illustrated by the cavalier handling of the upper half of the picture and the evident relish with which the figure and forms in the lower half were constructed. And when he was faced by the problem of organizing a multiplicity of elements in a picture, as in *The Gross Clinic*, or even *The Swimming Hole*, the result is usually a banal, pyramidal arrangement—dully academic, or clumsily posed.

Only occasionally he achieves a freshness and individuality in his composition and this significantly enough in earlier works such as *The Pair-Oared Shell* (1872), *The Biglen Brothers Turning the Stake* (1873),

* *Thomas Eakins His Life and Work*, by Lloyd Goodrich. Macmillan.

The Artist and his Father Hunting Reed Birds (1874), *Hunting* (a sketch) (circa 1874), *River* (1881). The freshness in these works undoubtedly derives from the artist's enthusiasm for the theme of the picture as a whole; his interest here was not concentrated on an individual element, or elements. And in each case these compositions were aided toward formal unity by echoes of the dominant, almost straight horizon line or river bank in the shapes of various minor motives—the sweeps, the scull, the stake, for example, in one, or the gunwales of the boat, the pole, gun and reeds, in another. And in all five a flat unity of surface is preserved by the artist's truthfulness to his view of the settings with their broad bands of relatively unbroken color; river and sky, marsh and sky, or beach and sky.

But on the whole Eakins rarely saw the rectangle of his canvas as area to be composed throughout. He was not so much interested in creating pictures out of forms as he was in painting pictures of forms. His much vaunted "realism" might be more truly described as "familiarism." For Eakins, appearance was reality. Metaphysical, or poetic reality was as foreign to his art as humor. His interest in the everyday world about him was in objects and forms which he might reproduce with a convincing suggestion of three-dimensionality on his canvas—particularly the nude form. But in an unsympathetic environment once again his temperance asserted itself, chilling even the courage of this interest. He was constantly aware of the nude form under his sitter's clothes. He would frequently try to prevail on his clothed female sitters to pose for him in the nude. Still he painted few nudes. Psychologically he seems to have had much in common with Etty; but he remained a Philadelphian Etty—a temperance Etty.

Eakins' weakness in painting is perhaps best brought out by his work in another medium: once again a temperate giving himself, either a blindness to the full problem posed by the chosen medium of expression, or a reluctance to face it. Sculpture had a great attraction for Eakins especially in his latter years. Yet all his work in this field was in relief, sometimes very high relief, but never in the complete round. In this sense, as Mr. Goodrich points out, it was the sculpture of a painter. Similarly, in the opposite order, his painting, through his emphasis on forms within the picture to the neglect of the formal unity of the picture as a whole, remains for the most part the painting of a man with a sculptor's interest in individual forms, not a painter's interest in organizing a unified canvas.

Eakins' virtue was an infinite capacity for taking pains in a world little interested in what he lived for. Occasionally his naiveté would produce something surprising such as the pose of the arms and head of the girl at the piano in *Home Scene* (circa 1870), with its air of a Balthus arrangement. Sometimes he would work so patiently and concentratedly over a figure in a picture that he would seem to warm it

into life by the persistent caress of his brush in spite of his disregard of the rest of the canvas, as with the seated figure in *A Lady With Setter Dog* (1885).

But taken all in all, Eakins remains an academician in homespun,—a model of stubbornness in the pursuit of an ideal—temperate as that may have been. He was a high type of the hard-working art-student of the mid-nineteenth century who returned from Paris to a native town that was so thoroughly cut off from the living currents of art that the ideas he brought back with him continued to be regarded dangerously liberal for the next half century. His idols to the end of his life in 1916 were those of his school years in Paris—all academicians of that period: Laurens, Bonnat, Regnault, and above all Gerôme—"the greatest painter of the nineteenth century," he often said. Fortuny was another. And there is no evidence that he ever changed the opinion of Delacroix he wrote in his notebooks during his Paris years: "Ses tableaux sont abominables et généralement d'un dessin impossible."

The greatest pitfall in ancestor-hunting is over-eagerness. There is no cause for national embarrassment in the fact that painting in the United States during the nineteenth century may not have produced figures of the international stature of such American literary figures as Melville or Henry James, or because contemporary painting in this country may not yet have produced artists of the international importance of the architect Frank Lloyd Wright, or the photographer Alfred Stieglitz. Nor is this a justification for disregarding international standards, or for a loss of sense of international proportion in judging the virtues of artists of limited local, or regional interest. We are only too glad to pit Melville, James, Wright and Stieglitz against all comers in their fields; we should frankly face the importance of looking at our lesser men in the light of a similar standard and of facing the verdict. Eakins is undoubtedly a greater painter than his American followers in somewhat the same tradition such as Duveneck, Henri and Bellows, and his predecessors back to Copley; but we must not forget his contemporaries abroad such as Degas or Renoir, or even the brilliant European academicians of that period, his own French idols and others. Nothing is gained for contemporary American art, or for the art of the future by closing our eyes to international standards in the fine arts, or by seeking to blow up a minor talent to fill the lack of a major one.

But the inspiration of a sound artistic expression—even a national flowering—need not come from a great world figure. Frequently the fresh and ingenuous expression of a smaller man, innocent of academic ambitions but deeply imbued with his own passions or the emotional life of his community, has a more stimulating power than the most competent exponent of the academic tradition. And this was what Mexico apparently found in José Guadalupe Posada in the early nineteen-



José Guadalupe Posada: Calavera of the Female Dandy



José Guadalupe Posada: Calavera of Huerta

twenties, to judge from the strikingly presented, comprehensive exhibition of his work held at the Art Institute of Chicago this spring.

Posada was a simple man, a print-maker who spent all his life in Mexico City and Aguascalientes, the town in which he was born. Due to the political troubles in Mexico during his formative years religious art was hidden away; even the magnificent colonial altars had been replaced in the churches by others of white plaster following the European trend of the period. Posada may never have put a brush to canvas in his life. Yet both Orozco and Rivera, the two foremost figures in twentieth-century Mexican art, acknowledge their profound debt to Posada as a "determining influence in their career, esthetics and professional conduct."*

During his life Posada never assumed anything but a frank artisan attitude to his work. He was simply a printmaker to the people who lived for his work and aspired to no greater material prosperity. He began working as a child making pottery; as a boy he attended a drawing academy for a very brief period. This was practically the extent of his formal education. But he soon found he had a talent for engraving. He was surrounded by a landscape of great natural beauty; he was born into a period of social and political ferment that was molding a new nation; and he lived all his life close to a people in whom the anonymous and spontaneous manifestations of folk art had never died out. Before he was twenty years old, Posada had mastered the art of lithography and had become famous for his illustrations in the paper *El Jicote*. From lithography he turned to wood engraving; and from wood, to burin engraving in type metal. He was an indefatigable worker. During his forty-one years it is estimated that he produced more than 20,000 engravings. Yet for all his genius and popularity, Posada died alone, January 20, 1913, very poor, in that same humble atmosphere which had produced his fertile and prodigious art. Three of his friends, of whom "only one can read" as was recorded in the death certificate, accompanied his remains to the Cemetery of Dolores "in which the civil authorities had given them a ticket for a sixth class grave." Seven years later, Posada's unclaimed remains were exhumed and tossed into a common grave.

Yet from the presentation by the Art Institute it was immediately apparent why Posada's art had the influence it did on the younger men who followed him. On the wall facing the entrance to the exhibition, a tiny engraving, *Calavera of Huerta*, actually 5 9/16" x 11 7/16", was enlarged photographically into a panel roughly 6 ft. x 15 ft. The effect was at once monumental, terrifying. Each line, each form, had its

* *Posada: Printmaker to the Mexican People*—text by Fernando Gamboa, catalogue by Carl O. Schniewind and Hugh L. Edwards (Chicago: the Art Institute of Chicago, 1944).

structural and dramatic place in the rectangle. Economy, force, conviction, fantasy, and "reality"—poetic as well as plastic—were there.

Here was a man who throughout his work evidently lived for emotional expression. Here was a man who evidently loved to draw, who had complete confidence in his intuitional placing of forms within the rectangle of his paper, a man who, even in such a simple design as his *Calavera of Don Quixote*, clearly felt every fractional inch of his sheet should play an organic part in the composite. A man who, in such a work as his famous *Calavera of the Female Dandy*—a skeleton bust crowned by a huge hat of lace and flowers—recognized the eloquent dramatic possibilities of linear design. Here was work that drew its nurture from the folk art—the vernacular of the community in which its creator was born. Art which depended on a tradition not for a refinement of "cookery" in painting, but for a common esthetic of composition on which to base its intelligibility.

Instead of avoiding fantasy as Eakins did, Posada made it the basis of his expression. Humor was the life-blood of Posada's work; movement, and rhythm its pulse-beat. Here was a man whose work was as violent as Eakins' was temperate: Posada, a simple print-maker, yet one of the inspirations of a national art awakening.

JAMES JOHNSON SWEENEY

Books

BERNANOS AND CHRISTIAN LIBERTY

PLEA FOR LIBERTY. By Georges Bernanos. Pantheon Books. \$3.00.

As a pamphleteer, Georges Bernanos belongs to the lineage of French Catholic polemicists of the nineteenth century, from Léon Bloy down to the anti-Semitic crackpot and brilliant journalist Edouard Drumont. The main contention of those people was that democracy is the reign of money (and hence of the Jews), that it is characterized by materialistic scepticism, incapable of a clean-cut distinction between Good and Evil, and therefore unworthy of the hieratical dignity of ruling society; that its claim to the loyalty of the lower classes was pure demagoguery, because only Christianity and the Church really care for the people, since only the Christian conception recognizes in the poor what is most important to human beings, "dignity"; and only the Catholic Church "honors" the poor. This line of thought, or rather of attack, against the modern world in the name of a peculiar reinterpretation of certain myths, was accompanied in Léon Bloy, and is accompanied in Bernanos, by a violent distaste for the official representatives of the elite: Catholic high clergy and upper classes. These, they maintain, instead of behaving with the uprightness which befits the chosen few, have surrendered to the demon of mediocrity and are guilty of the same indifference toward absolute values, and of the same laxity in practical conduct, which should be the exclusive characteristic of materialists, Jews, epicureans and other second-rate sinners. Thus the picture remains satisfactorily black and white. It is the old grudge of the die-hard monarchists of the Restoration against a Monarchy which had gone bourgeois.

What is interesting in Bernanos, the pamphleteer, is that with him the fight against the elite has progressively gained in importance. It started with his first virulent attack against the French reactionary bourgeoisie, *The Great Fear of the Right-Thinking People*, published in 1931, and has ended up, after the denunciation of Franco and of the Spanish clergy in 1938 and the desperate addresses to the French people after Munich, in this *Plea for Liberty*, which is almost entirely devoted to a fiery indictment of the French bourgeoisie and a passionate defense of the French common people, *les petites gens* so dear to the Left. "For years," writes Bernanos, "the bourgeoisie has been conducting a campaign of slander against my people. . . . It will always be possible to write whatever one has a mind to about our social conflicts. The day nonetheless has come when one of the rivals therein, carried away by

hate and fear, broke the national covenant, and for its own purposes used the enemy against the nation."

Bernanos must have realized, while writing that, that he was simply restating one of the fundamental principles of French republicanism since 1792: the irreconcilable opposition between the Nation and those who lay claim to the ownership of the Nation. So that the infamous exclamation of General Weygand at Bordeaux, after the armistice, "*Au moins, on se sera débarassé de la Gueuse*" (the *gucuse*, the "hussy," being, in the language of those gentlemen, the Republic), while it scandalized Bernanos and several of his friends, did not come as a surprise to any average radical-socialist.

Léon Bloy also used to attack the meanness of the bourgeoisie and of modern Catholics oblivious of Christian grandeur. He spoke, as Bernanos does, in the name of a purely imaginary Christianity which was essentially the thirteenth century idealized. What distinguishes Bernanos, together with the lack of ascetic harshness, is the fact that, after having unmasked, with a frankness and a vigor which command great respect, the Pharisees of the Church and of the upper classes, he is practically forced back (yielding gracefully enough) to that humble hope so deeply rooted in the customs and ways of thinking of the French, and yet so fragile and so constantly challenged: *La République*. A hope which, insofar as it was authentic, had no ordinal numbers attached. This course of Bernanos is smartly symbolized on the cover of this English translation of his *Lettres aux Anglais* by the flaming tricolor which frames and overwhelms an Orléans fleur-de-lis. Of course, Bernanos still affirms that he wants to see restored what he believes to have been the basic principle of the French monarchy: "There are no privileges, only duties." At the same time, he advances the questionable claim that "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity" are the very essence of Christianity on the march, as he calls it. If asked to give one single example of the Catholic Church not answering with anathema and secular fire the people who raised that standard, he would be at a loss. But one has to understand that for Bernanos Christianity, the Church, and such things, are pure ideas, or rather, enthralling phantoms which can never be denied, only given new shapes by the poetic imagination.

Quite justly, Bernanos identifies the French ruling class, which he hates, with the reactionary upper classes, the financial, military and clerical castes in whose hands the power eventually rested, and not with the radical-socialist and socialist politicians who never really ruled, although they were often the parasites and the accomplices of the rulers. And about the relations between the French people and its rulers, Bernanos has some keen insights: "Our elites," he writes, "began to hate the people almost without knowing it on the day when they despaired of it; and I can put my finger on that day: it was the day, in May, 1923, that famous "black Sunday," disappointing all the hopes which, only

after seventeen years, utter defeat was to fulfill. What! less than four years after the armistice, those incorrigible masses were voting 'Left!' Once again the people were eluding the elites!"

And on the middle classes: "It felt against the proletariat, so eager for social reform, the same resentment as a merchant might feel toward an employee who elects to ask for a raise on the day when a large note falls due. Even more, our middle class was annoyed at the proletariat for its budding sympathy with Russia, the bankruptcy of which had just cleaned out many an old stocking. . . . The collapse of the Russian loans, coincident with communist propaganda, was a fact of considerable effect among us. It dug between the petty bourgeoisie and the working class a deep rift; it pushed the petty bourgeoisie into the arms of the upper middle class."

What is interesting in Bernanos' attitude is the constant distinction he establishes between real society and the intellectual, institutional and traditional structures which claim to represent society. This also is not new in the milieu of the French Right. There was Maurras' famous opposition, which could not stand close examination, between the "real country" and the "legal country." There was also a certain exploitation of Proudhon's anarchism by people who were forced to round up as many arguments as they could to show that the existing State was an artificial creation unsuited to the true nature of the French. Their actual concern being all the time with State, Power and Greatness, not to speak of militarism, the dialectical game of those people was up very soon. The path Bernanos treads is a different one. He is following very closely, even if he does not realize it, the idea which inspires all of Michelet's history-writing, that the only real history is the history of the people themselves, or rather the history of how the people are manhandled, sacrificed, repressed, their aspirations betrayed or ignored by despotic abstractions. Bernanos' interpretation of the French defeat, the opposition he establishes between a people that sincerely wanted liberty, justice and peace, meaning by that very concrete, common, everyday achievements, and a ruling class which, in the best case, feared everything that was real in those words and was busy keeping them in the state of electoral slogans, what is this if not going back to Michelet, to the elementary postulates of French republicanism?

One does not know how much Bernanos himself would mind such a conclusion. But it is very probable that the conversion from Catholic absolutism to something which is anyway far more flexible was accomplished, in Bernanos, through his admiration for Charles Péguy. French right-wing intellectuals were only too glad to capture Péguy, because Péguy had spoken of Christian Honor, Joan of Arc and of France as the standard bearer of militant Christianity. The trouble was that Péguy himself never for a moment ceased to be a socialist, a "dreyfusard" and a passionate republican; as far as Catholicism was concerned, he used

to say that he was a Catholic of the period before the Council of Constance. By which he meant before the confirmation of Roman supremacy, and also before the final crushing of the heretics, John Huss and Jean Petit, the French friar who advocated the legitimacy of tyrannicide. Moreover, religion was to him a purely personal affair in which, Maritain's solicitations notwithstanding, he did not tolerate any intrusion. If Péguy abandoned political socialism, it was after having watched with a marvelously keen eye the transformation of Jaurés, the apostle, into Jaurés, the great orator, the successful party leader and clever parliamentarian; and especially after having seen the great motive of the *affaire Dreyfus* (which consisted for him in the absolute rejection of the *raison d'Etat*) become the *instrumentum regni* of the radical-socialist committees. He found the sublimation of the ideals which had inflamed his youth in the Christian themes. But he remained a disciple of Michelet, and never yielded to the lures of reactionary classicism.

Bernanos is very different from Péguy. He has neither Péguy's *esprit de finesse* nor his peculiar gift for blending in one extremely subtle and captivating line of argument the reasons of the heart and the reasons of the mind. But he has certainly become infected with the basic motives of Péguy's republicanism. For a French patriot of good faith this course is properly speaking unavoidable, simply because the opposite implies the attitude Bernanos finds so hateful in the French bourgeoisie: the rejection of the great mass of the people.

To give his patriotism some kind of universal content, Bernanos needs symbols like Chivalry, Honor, the Good Kings, with the beacon of Christian faith illuminating the whole. The trouble is that for more than a century, the French people have had no great use for such things. The conviction that life is not worth living if it is not lived in the light of an ideal of total regeneration (which for Bernanos cannot exist outside of Christianity) the French worker has already had. He called it "socialism." Socialism to him meant very simply life made reasonable. He did not need historical symbols or Christian dogmas to express it, precisely because it was a true conviction, and he did not want to have it confused. For Bernanos, and for many others, it was a mediocre kind of ideal. But, as a matter of fact, it has engendered tragedy rather than vaudeville.

George Bernanos does not speak exclusively about France. He is very much concerned with the destiny of Europe and the world in general. On this subject also he has some eloquent things to say, generally in the tone of sarcasm and suspicion. As, for example, this sentence about those realistic politicians who expect to reestablish order with the help of "the millions of parishioners bedecked with blue, yellow, green, red ribbons, and posted in line by the Jesuit Fathers. . . . A desperate mistake, my dear friends. . . . You count upon him to defend your society, and he reasons after the same pattern: he counts on your

society to defend him." To the Europeans, this is one of the things Bernanos has to say: "The last peace was indeed a fine trap for rats, but this one will be built on the scale of a pit to catch wild elephants."

Beside detesting Rome and the Romans, Bernanos hates the modern State, likes the outspoken and has a preference for the ignored. He is a captivating man. And if one wonders why, with all the pungent and pertinent remarks he makes, his polemic does not finally reach under the surface of things, the reason is that his preconceptions prevent him from drawing any particular conclusion. So that, in the end, things remain very much as they were.

NICOLA CHIAROMONTE

THE ARMED OBSCURANTIST

THE CONDITION OF MAN. By *Lewis Mumford*. Harcourt, Brace. \$5.00.

THIS BOOK is the third of a series which Lewis Mumford has devoted to the study of "organic humanism," the first two being *Technics and Civilization* (1934) and *The Culture of Cities* (1938). Starting with the premise that modern man has been dehumanized by industrialism and positivist philosophy (the two are practically identical in Mumford's mind) and that consequently his society is disintegrating, Mumford looks forward to the renewal of the organic personality and the society which organic man will create. The reader is led through the European past, from the Greeks to the present, while the author describes how other societies have disintegrated and then achieved a new birth. The fragmentary personality of the Greek, the wages of too much rationalism, was made whole by the fertility god Dionysus; the cult of Cybele was a social response to the excessive practicalness of the Roman mind; Jesus made whole the fragmentary rigidities of the social thinking of Moses and the Pharisees. The "Medieval Synthesis" was a crowning achievement of the rounded personality. Modern man must try to achieve such a synthesis. Like the Chicago-St. John's school of educators, Mumford has taken to ransacking the past in search of guidance and understanding. But Mumford's collocation of the past and the present reminds me of the scene in Cocteau's *Blood of a Poet* where an eighteenth-century man watches glassy-eyed over a dimly defined twentieth-century game of cards. The past is clearly there, but its relation to the present remains a mystery. The card-playing hero does not seem to be concerned with the eighteenth century; and all the eighteenth century can do is gasp slightly when it becomes apparent that the hero has been condemned to destruction.

The first three words of the Introduction—"What is man?"—do not impress the reader with Mumford's ability to ask fruitful questions.

And when, on page 7 of a 467-page book, he says, "So much for the elemental [i.e., biological] nature of man," the reader grits his teeth in preparation for another giddy slide through history on the supernaturalist toboggan. Mumford does not recognize the efficacy of rational thought: all that man "knows" or believes about the physical world is the result of his own personal and social development"; this would be a simple tautology if it did not imply that no two people can know the same thing about the physical world, that, in other words, the scientific method is a complete illusion.

For a man who suspects rationalism wherever he finds it, Mumford has an extraordinarily high opinion of the indestructibility of ideas and their far-reaching influence. Thus he finds a "drawback" in the fact that the institutions of the Middle Ages progressively obscured the Christian "idea," as if it were possible for them not to do so; and he implies that the men of the Middle Ages should have returned continually to the original idea, as if the original idea were somewhere (perhaps in Palestine?) waiting for them. And again, Mumford tells us solemnly that "the conception of life as a picnic has certain serious defects. First of all, it is an infantile aim, bound close to the pleasure principle," etc., etc. Now, it appears that if I go to the park for a Sunday picnic, I do so because of the nefarious influence of Rousseau.

The Condition of Man is a history without a method and without a unifying passion. Mumford has seriously misrepresented the character of the cultures he talks about. Although modern society is in a state of disintegration and chaos, Mumford has as little trouble finding a symbol which represents it as if it were perfectly organic: the symbol is the technician, the business man, the promoter, the "passive fascist" (for the "active fascist" in Germany and Italy is nothing but a sort of super-pragmatist, i.e., technician). The author then deduces the character of the intellectual and the worker and everyone else from the character of the technician. But when he says that "the wisdom of the race" revolted against the modern mechanical world conception in the person of Blake, Ruskin, Morris, Arnold, Emerson, and a dozen others, he neatly destroys his own picture of modern society. When he talks about medieval society, he does so in terms of a very few men whom he admires, such as St. Thomas and Abelard. The people of the Middle Ages, we gather, were like St. Thomas and Abelard: "even the dumb peasant" "could not be altogether vile . . . he daily had the experience of a sacred art"; I should like to see some proof of this common allegation that the medieval proletarian was better off than the modern proletarian. The Romans appear to have all been pragmatists, made stupid (or like Marcus Aurelius, mystic) with wealth and boredom.

Cultural bolshevism flourishes in Mumford's kind of impulsive vitalism and obscurantism:

It was not in the bloody operations of the guillotine in 1793

that the forces of revolution and disintegration showed themselves most clearly. . . . No: It is in the apparently innocent lucubrations of David Hume that the real Reign of Terror began: the beginnings of a nihilism that has reached its full development only in our own times.

This wretched piece of sophistry is only pallidly matched by the contention that Darwin "justified man's contemporary inhumanity to man by pinning the whole process on nature." Freud, Dostoyevsky and Spengler, Mumford cannot leave without insinuating their guilt in the promotion of fascism. In the space of 14 lines on page 377, we find Proust, Eliot, Joyce, American gangsters and European fascists all foggily lumped together as evidence of disintegration and decay. This is presumably an example of the "art of co-ordinated thinking" which will characterize the coming age of renewal.

The coming age of renewal, says Mumford, will be the age of the whole personality. We shall live in a state of "dynamic equilibrium" and we shall devote ourselves to "cultivation, humanization, co-operation, symbiosis." In a "world civilization" we shall see "systematic cultivation" of lands and the "internal recolonization of every country"; but despite these vast projects (or in order to carry them out?), we must "decentralize power in all its manifestations." I cannot see that Mumford is offering us anything very plausible. Nor do I understand how it is possible, let alone desirable, for the "ideal personality" to be in "dynamic interaction with every part of his environment and every part of his heritage."

This book is Lewis Mumford's most ambitious work, and I suppose it will be officially accepted as an important, prophetic book, perhaps a little weak logically, but, morally, worthy of the great traditions of social thought. From the author of a book like this, however, we ought to demand evidence of historical intelligence and social passion. We ought not to accept as substitutes these armed raids upon history; this crude cultural coercion; this compulsive vilification of serious thinkers temperamentally different from oneself; this setting oneself up as judge of corruption and decadence, as accredited protector of art, truth and the nobility of man; this denial that any human being can fulfill his possibilities without first being locked up in the past and coordinated into the organic present. I have found very little understanding of man and his activities in *The Condition of Man*.

RICHARD CHASE

A MAN IN HIS TIME

DANGLING MAN. By Saul Bellow. Vanguard. \$2.50.

HERE, for the first time I think, the experience of a new generation has been seized and recorded. It is one thing simply to have lost one's faith; it is quite another to begin with the sober and necessary

lack of illusion afforded by Marxism, and then to land in what seems to be utter disillusion, only to be forced, stage by stage, to even greater depths of disillusion. This is the experience of the generation that has come to maturity during the depression, the sanguine period of the New Deal, the days of the Popular Front and the days of Munich, and the slow, loud, ticking imminence of a new war. With the advent of war, every conceivable temptation not to be honest, not to look directly at experience, not to remember the essential vows of allegiance to the intelligence and to human possibility and dignity—every conceivable temptation and every plea of convenience, safety and casuistry has presented itself.

Joseph, the hero of *Dangling Man*, is remarkable because he has the strength (and it is his only strength) to keep his eyes open and his mind awake to the quality of his experience. He has been for a time a member of the Communist Party and he has been offered a business career by a successful older brother. He has rejected both. With the coming of the war, he undergoes the slow strangulation of being drafted but not inducted into the army because of various bureaucratic formalities. During this period in the inter-regnum between civilian and army life, he is gradually stripped of the few pretenses and protections left to him. A Communist refuses to speak to him; his brother attempts to lend him money; his niece taunts him as a beggar; his friends who have made their "meek adjustments" are repelled by his unwillingness to accept things as they are; he quarrels with his friends, his relatives, his wife who is supporting him and the people who live in the rooming house in which he spends his idle days. And finally, unable to endure the continuous emptiness and humiliation of his life, he sees to it that he is immediately taken into the army.

Is it necessary to emphasize the extent to which this experience is characteristic? Here are the typical objects of a generation's sensibility: the phonograph records, the studio couch, the reproductions of Van Gogh, the cafeteria; and the typical relationships: the small intellectual circle which gradually breaks up, the easy and meaningless love affair, the marriage which is neither important nor necessary, the party which ends in hysterical outbreaks or sickness of heart, the gulf separating this generation from the previous one and the family life from which it came.

What is not typical is Joseph's stubborn confrontation and evaluation of the character of his life. He insists on making explicit his dependency on his wife. He tells himself again and again that his days are wasted. He seizes the Communist party-member who tries to snub him, and insists that as a human being he has a right to be greeted. He tells himself and anyone who will listen that he does not like the kind of life his society has made possible. And he refuses to yield to the philistinism and the organized lack of imagination that consoles itself by saying: "It

might be worse," "It is worse elsewhere," "It cannot be other than it is," "This is the lesser evil, hence it is good."

As a novel, the faults of *Dangling Man* come mainly from the fact that it is somewhat too linear in its movement and contained within too small an orbit. Thus, in seeking to keep Joseph's frame of mind constantly in the foreground, Bellow brushes over a number of dramatic possibilities, particularly those inherent in Joseph's marriage relation and his rejection of financial success. The narrative is perhaps too spare in its use of detail and background. And the use of the journal as a form blocks off the interesting shift of perspective that could be gained by presenting Joseph through the eyes of some person of the preceding generation. But, given Bellow's choice of a diary for conveying a larger social pattern, these limitations were perhaps, hardly to be avoided, and this small book is an important effort to describe the situation of the younger generation.

DELMORE SCHWARTZ

MODERN ESSAYS

THE SHIELD OF ACHILLES. By Horace Gregory. Harcourt, Brace. \$2.00.

IT IS A NICE question whether to review the book this appears to be, or the book Mr. Gregory says it is. The book it appears to be is an assemblage of discursive book reviews and occasional pieces about "poetry and the lives of men who wrote it," many of them instructive and perceptive. The book its author says it is is a series of Essays on Beliefs in Poetry, all of them presumably cutting the facets of a central theme which has something to do with poetry as "reflections of life," something to do with poetry as self-knowledge, and something to do with "morality as a humane art." Without the preface I should not have guessed that it dealt with such general matters.

If one were asked only to comment on the magazine pieces, one could acknowledge without embarrassment their considerable merits. The best of the fifteen essays here reprinted, it seems to me, are of two main kinds: those which, because they deal with relatively unfamiliar material, will be genuinely informative to most readers; and those which, because they use comparisons as conversational gambits, can startle the reader into odd perceptions. The first kind requires a talent often attempted by the heavy tools of researchers, but usually missed for lack of discrimination as to what unfamiliar material is worth unearthing. Mr. Gregory works with more delicate instruments: his sharpest tool in the essays on Landor's elegies, on John Clare, and on Thomas Lovell Beddoes is an eye for genuinely alive and individual poetry to quote. In particular the essay on Beddoes, whose occasion was evidently a review of two scholarly volumes by Dr. H. W. Donner, rescues both Donner

and Beddoes from the university libraries to which such volumes are consigned. His quotations persuade you that Beddoes' poetry is worth reviving; his commentary at least suggests the neurotic involvement of tradition and temperament and politics which fertilized one strain in the Romantic imagination. If the essay does not thoroughly develop the historical generalizations, it does what is probably a better thing: it leads you back to the poetry itself.

On the other hand, the purpose of the comparative essays is to provide not information or recommendation but insights; perhaps for that reason the most successful are the least likely if you insist on any pedestrian exactitude. The value of such a comparison as that between George Moore and Sherwood Anderson is not that it shows an exact correspondence at all points, but rather that it amuses and startles, and so can emphasize effectively some of the sources of strength and of temptation in all regional writers, however diverse their cultures and their individual natures. On the other hand the assertion that Yeats in his latter days wore consciously the mask of Swift is certainly sounder and more obvious; but its measure of originality hardly deserves the panoply with which it marches in Mr. Gregory's essay. Much better, it seems to me, is a consciously whimsical device like the comparison of the child in Wordsworth's *Ode with Alice in Wonderland*. Mr. Gregory is not exactly clear himself as to whether he puts them together in order to make a parallel of similarity, a perpendicular of parody, or just a locus of points for departure. But I doubt that any particular consistency of relationship is of much importance; the excuse for the device is that it makes a lively gambit, that it strikes off in its erratic justification a number of insights and perceptions about the growing up (like Alice) of the Victorian age from the earlier Romantic worship both for childhood in particular, and for natural simplicity and purity in general.

It is from the same essay, however, that Mr. Gregory takes the symbol he uses to describe the attitude of the book he says he is writing. Somewhere between Wordsworth and Alice he finds it necessary to explain—I could not be sure quite why—"what we mean when we speak of poetry at all." It is here that the Shield of Achilles—or rather Homer's account of it—becomes "an analogy to and a criterion for the art of writing poetry." About that shield we are told three things: that it was "an extremely cunning work of art"; that it "seemed a mirror of the very world Achilles and his enemies had known"; and that, since Achilles wore it to protect his body from a deadly wound, it may have meant self-knowledge. In exactly what combinations or relations these three enter into the art of writing poetry Mr. Gregory does not attempt to tell us. Hence the possibilities for ambiguity are enchanting: Mr. Empson, I am sure, could produce at least three cubed, or twenty-seven. Is the self-knowledge of the poet (to take only one possibility) a sense of the way the world seems to both him *and* his enemies? I suspect that Mr.

Gregory suspects it may be so, and the psychological implications would be intriguing. But I doubt that it would be possible either to prove or disprove that interpretation by reference to the fifteen essays to which, says Mr. Gregory, the Shield of Achilles applies. And that I suppose, is the fundamental criticism: no unified intensity of attitude throughout the individual essays interprets the ambiguity.

Presumably, too, the Shield of Achilles is somehow connected with what Mr. Gregory describes as the crux of his position, a "moral attitude in regard to literature." The word "moral" is notoriously taken in a variety of senses, some of which are certainly relevant to literature. But which of them Mr. Gregory has in mind never becomes very clear, either in the general description or in two essays which are said to be central, those on Dr. Johnson and on Paul Elmer More. One gathers from the Johnson essay that it has something to do with a tragic sense of life, and something to do with religious devotion; but here there seems to be a forcing of the evidence offered that leaves one wondering what is meant. Mr. Gregory finds in the adaptation of Juvenal's *Vanity of Human Wishes* evidence for Johnson's profoundly tragic sense of life, and in his fine little elegy on Dr. Levet evidence for "the profound depths of Johnson's piety": in what sense, one wonders, does Mr. Gregory use "tragic sense" and "piety"? And if the Johnson essay leaves the criterion a little uncertain, the essay on More seems at pains to disown any limiting criteria at all. One assumes at the start, judging from the quotation from the *Shelburne Essays*, that moral criticism has something to do with absolute and permanent values; yet later Mr. Gregory blames More for finding Baudelaire "unclean," and excuses him by arguing that he was ill-equipped to read Symbolist poetry. I should think myself that an attitude to literature presented as in some way different would need, to be useful, to prove its bite by making some visible alteration in the hierarchy of accepted values. Or at least I should like to know with some precision what standards are operating. One can sympathize with Mr. Gregory's distrust for dogmatic definition, and still feel that one's own notion of a moral attitude in regard to literature is dissolving when More is presented as realizing "the fulfillment of his moral 'truths' only when he reduced the practices of moral criticism to the dignity and seriousness of a fine art."

In general I should feel that a certain inflation had overtaken this book in the course of elevating the day-to-day change of reviews and commentaries into the dignity of a bank of issue. The communication of a critical attitude requires either a core of judgment so central as to make itself felt willy-nilly, or a patient concern with systematic definition, logic, and application. Neither seems to be the talent of this book; its genuine virtues are a curiosity always disciplined by taste, and a taste often sparked by intuitive perception.

ANDREWS WANNING

THREE STYLES OF EXHORTATION

AMERICA UNLIMITED. By *Eric Johnston*. Doubleday Doran & Co. \$2.50.

THE PRACTICE OF IDEALISM. By *Alfred M. Bingham*. Duell, Sloan & Pearce. \$2.00.

WHAT IS OUR DESTINY. By *Norman Thomas*. Doubleday Doran & Co. \$2.00.

EACH of these tracts is a sample of what is being said by liberals, socialists and one type of capitalist. Embracing neither the "extreme" left nor the "extreme" right, they represent the middle ranges of current opinion in political economy. They contain no surprises.

Mr. Johnston writes what Mr. Johnston says in speeches; but without the living disguise of manic enthusiasm, it seems embarrassingly naked. Mr. Thomas hears the wicked talking the old nonsense; he knows what is going on and he is not at all tired of these formulations of it. Mr. Bingham patiently explains to us what is taking place; he displays good will and he is gentle with sympathy for those who are misled by ignorance. Each writes as we would expect him to write. None of them informs us of notable *facts* which have not been available. None sets forth a *theory* which tells us to look somewhere we had not already been told to look. All are primarily concerned with the hopes and arguments which surround *policies*.

Thomas' plans are honest, sincere and immediately unrealizable. That is no reason for not stating them, but one cannot live forever in that dimension. Johnston's policies, if taken seriously, are probably less realizable than Thomas'. I do not know his motives, nor how aware he is of consequences, but objectively, Johnston's creed is a mask behind which the business of this time gets done. Bingham's level of generality is rather high; one may agree with what he writes and yet feel no movement of the mind or purpose.

Mr. Johnston is a utopian capitalist. It does not matter much to him that utopian capitalism has been succeeded by the orthodoxy of the NAM. Johnston's eagerness contrasts oddly with the retrospective character of his utopia. He is anchored—if anywhere—in the early nineteenth century. And the only things he doesn't explain very well are world wars and depressions, which some metaphysicians would place at the center of present-day reality. He never really comes to grips with specific means of getting "American Business"—and hence "Americans" into an enthusiasm for chaos and insecurity. That is what I mean by utopian. And that is why his commercialized elation seems so mislocated. Some have said that Johnston speaks for the rank-and-file chamber of commerce man. He does handle, as if he really believed them, the symbols to which the Main Streeter is attached, but I doubt that he reflects the Main Streeter's mood. Certainly, he does not state his actual economic condition.

Thomas addresses his hopes to more concrete groups than do Bingham and Johnston. He speaks of farmer and labor unions, consumer coops, and a third party modeled more or less on the CCCF. To Bingham the problem of specific groups which might implement his program is troublesome, although he is precise enough as to his Keynesian policies. He writes to and for something called "a revolution of the common man," who throughout modern times has been "a middle-class man." Yet several pages later the common man is generalized to include the yellow and black races. Opposed to the common (middle-class) man in America stands "the respectable business man who is afraid of the future," the man with "Babbitt brains and Pegler hates." This is an impolite way of referring to the same little "American capitalist" upon whom Johnston pins our hopes for the future of his world, for a bigger Moscow and a better Chungking. All "Americans," he notes, are "capitalists," both economically and psychologically.

Johnston's key strategy is to steal the symbols of all aspiring groups, to incorporate them as members of the "capitalist" holding company. Thus: "I regard labor as an intrinsic part of business." This monopolistic practice piles up good will for business and solves all our problems. But since it is a symbolic solution only, heavy reliance must be placed in the further ritual of the correct attitude. Thus the difference between the enemies and the friends of the American way is more a matter of outlook and knowledge than of economic position and interests. The difference is between those who would go forward with relish and realism and those who just can't understand the American way; these latter are likely to be "intellectuals," especially those influenced by "European" ideas. But all the while, the "Kiwanian booster" understands it "without recourse to analysis."

Each author "accepts" the war: Johnston conventionally, Bingham with mingled disillusion and hope, Thomas with bitterness and frantic pleas to make it mean something. The war is not so central in the focus of Johnston as it is in the views of Thomas and Bingham. In many ways, Johnston is the most "isolationist" of the three; certainly he is the most nationalist. In contrast to Johnston's incidental notice of the war and his total absence of discussions of race, Thomas and Bingham see the war as a key indicator of the condition of the world and race as a world problem of frightening dimensions. They seek to explain the war and to squeeze something good from the sacrifices it entails. The peace haunts them all, except Johnston who refuses to be haunted by anything.

Each presents an image of himself, although neither Bingham nor Thomas in any way intrude their personalities. Bingham is the reasonable man sincerely trying to understand, explain, straighten things out. Thomas is a man who was against fascism when . . . Churchill first began to praise it and when Roosevelt was brushing off the Loyalists. Thomas is the indignant man with the big anger. Johnston, after

modestly indicating that his career was due to "accidents in business organizations," personally endorses the Horatio Alger myth, at least "in the symbolic sense." He thinks "the views of one business man" might "mirror the whole of America" and so, as a "medium," he writes this book for you. His view of America is about as real as the image he presents of himself. Thomas' view has the polemical accuracy of one who takes upon himself the sufferings of the merciless world. Bingham is usually somewhere in between.

C. WRIGHT MILLS

ENCHANTED SCENE

THE WOMEN ON THE PORCH. *By Caroline Gordon. Charles Scribner's Sons. \$2.50.*

CAROLINE GORDON is an accomplished writer, in whose finest work, such as, for instance, her admirable long story, "The Captive," are qualities some of her colleagues might well envy and emulate; an ease and directness with language, a strict control of tone, a holding to a narrative line with no showy intrusions of stylistic acrobatics or the extended irrelevant free play of sensibility, that marks a very pure kind of writing. But in her latest novel Miss Gordon has set herself a task to which her natural equipment is not as well keyed.

To open this book to almost any page is to find, in some straightforward or evocative description, some delineation of what on the stage is called "business," or account of a conversation, the mark of a craftsman's hand. We may find nothing to astonish, but a great deal to please. In the whole picture, many of these passages, rich, luminous, sharp as they may be, unhappily seem too often fortuitous, distracting to the point of being detrimental both to the design and spirit of the novel. It is true that we are under an obligation to Miss Gordon to hold ourselves down to the pace she has set for herself, and the fact that we may be accustomed to a more nervous tempo is no fault of this novelist's, whose entire method here is one of understatement and quiet implication, but we must not therefore fail to inquire, as we go, whether she has used this method to the best purpose, and for the best reasons; whether all the patience that is required of us is to be fed by the necessary spring of sufficiently meaningful interest.

The derangement of human relations, the tragedy of failure, the treachery of circumstance, all have enough mystery to engage a writer forever. We have no wish and no right to quarrel with a set of characters or situations because they are cast in a familiar mold, which we are prepared to meet easily with a critical vocabulary that includes expressions like frustration, maladjustment, defeatism, ambivalence. The novelist is required, however, to be more than the historian of such cases,

and must contribute to the working out of such themes, passion, or irony, or wisdom. Wallace Stevens has said it:

*That's it, the more than rational distortion,
The fiction that results from feeling.*

Passion is conspicuously lacking here, and it is this which makes it possible to put this book down feeling, at the end, like the rather doubtful hero, a "deathly weariness," not because what has been dealt with is decay, disillusion, disappointment, the death of the spirit, but because these inescapable horrors have not been illumined in an adequately affecting way.

It is difficult to be concerned with characters whose actions are motivated by compulsions neither of the mind or the heart. The wife who flees from the discovery of her husband's infidelity, does so blindly, and takes a lover of her own and at the end deserts him with the same kind of sentimental capriciousness; the husband who becomes a woman's lover from some quirk of feeling that his understanding should have forced him to disregard, and leaves her in the same spirit of wanton irresponsibility, follows his wife (apparently mostly from dread of the ennui of spending the ten days remaining to him before a trip to Europe, alone in New York), and thinks to himself as he goes: "I do not know why I am going."

Miss Gordon has, from the highly unreal relationship of this Jim and Catherine Chapman, hung the rest of her novel. Since it is not straight narrative, she has employed, like the good writer that she is, the devices of rapid transition in time and sensibility, elision, evocation, all darting and circular techniques, to enrich her novel. It is the poet's method, and given the essentially static situation, a suggestive and useful one. It provides a series of events otherwise only arbitrarily connected, with a genuine unity, although it fails to draw the characters, often violently involved, out of their complete spiritual isolation from one another.

In Catherine's childhood-home there are three women relatives, who, though recomposing on the same stem, fall separately to the ground; the aged grandmother whose mind is caught entirely in the past, her pathetic daughter, whose life time and drudgery have gnawed meaninglessly; the homely cousin, who long ago suffered too great an emotional shock. On the next farm, where things are somewhat livelier, live a group of people of a more modern stamp; Cousin Elsie, rich, discontented, wordly ex-expatriate who in defiance of tradition has razed the ancestral home and set up an imitation Mt. Vernon, her friend and guest, the urbane and homosexual architect, her son, belligerently a farmer, who hates his mother and despises her friend and his predilections. It is this man, this arch-adolescent, to whom Catherine, having smarted at the hands of her too-intellectual, rootless husband, turns, without love.

To those people, and to their "cursed" and "enchanted" land, Miss Gordon has given her complex attention. The countryside has come off rather better than the people. Miss Gordon is marvelously sensitive to the looks of things, animals, movements, changes of light and color; she has spent on their delineation a scrupulous care that springs from awareness and devotion, and they reward her, and us, by having dimension, vividness, life. Nothing could be clearer than that she is the complete countrywoman, horsewoman, connoisseur and able raconteur of the kind of stories that abound in large families (and especially in southern families). But as her black Maria says: "There is no use in telling everything you know, especially if you know more than other people." She has, in short, let her love rest too heavily on the trappings and suits, and not enough on the perception of the movement in the soul, the moral change, the "internal difference where the meanings are."

GERTRUDE BUCKMAN

FOUR POETS

NEWS OF THE PHOENIX. *By A. J. M. Smith. Coward-McCann.*

THE BIG TIME. *By Alfred Hayes. Howell, Soskin. \$2.50.*

1 X 1. *By E. E. Cummings. Henry Holt. \$2.00.*

SELECTED POEMS, 1923-1943. *By Robert Penn Warren. Harcourt, Brace. \$2.50.*

OF THESE four books, three belong in style and feeling to the tradition established in the twenties and thirties. The fourth is rather a case of he wou'd if he cou'd; this is the case of Mr. Smith. Mr. Smith appears to be a competent writer who has not yet found either a style or a subject of his own. The bulk of the poems in this volume are Georgian in manner, but a variety of styles and attitudes are represented. Sometimes Mr. Smith writes on "the worth of a hard thing done perfectly" in the middle style of Yeats; sometimes he asserts in the manner of Auden, and with a now melancholy assurance, that

*Each shall choose his place,
Be Dead, or Red;*

there is even a poem modelled on the "Give, Sympathize, Control" passage in "The Waste Land." But you are left in the end with the feeling that Mr. Smith is still most at home with the Georgians.

Mr. Hayes, on the other hand, has perhaps too thoroughly assimilated his influences. He is presented to us by his publishers as "a warm-hearted dramatist," an antidote to "the pale cerebral poetry of the modern esthetes." I suppose this account of him is the blurb-writer's notion of how to appeal to that audience of which Mr. Cummings remarks that it

*does nothing except preexist
its hoi in its polloi.*

It is, however, a judgment which not only shows a lamentable ignorance of current poetry but is a calumny on Mr. Hayes. Mr. Hayes may have his limitations; I think he has; but they consist rather in his inability to get beyond a part of the attitude which Mr. Eliot—that modern esthete—established with “Prufrock” and “Portrait of a Lady”; this is the Eliot who dealt in the irony and pathos of urban vulgarity and confident uncertainty, the Eliot of

You will see me any morning in the park

Reading the comics and the sporting page, etc.

All this, to be sure, is rather watered down in Mr. Hayes, and the emphasis is on the pathos, the nostalgia, and the violence, rather than on the evaluating irony and the dramatic placing of action. But he has the manner:

We must all make our readjustments to the world,

We all must compromise, he said.

I was quiet. There was nothing I could answer.

This may not be anything particularly exciting as poetry goes, but it is certainly better than anything you would guess at from hearing Mr. Hayes called “a warm-hearted dramatist.”

Mr. Cummings is not, like these, an heir of the twenties and thirties so much as one of the founders of their fortunes. He remains, in *I X I*, his familiar self, still unconvinced that the unique exquisiteness of living in general and of loving in particular can be conveyed without resort to verbal displacement. This is a device which forces careful reading, and when it is used merely to point up a poem, it probably does more good than harm. Even when it is used pretty extensively, you can sometimes feel the fine structure and the sensitivity of diction and cadence on which it is imposed (e.g., poem XL); for Mr. Cummings is, back of all his habit-forming recourse to

deeper is life than lose: higher than have

—but beauty is more each than living's all,

a genuine poet and a considerable craftsman. This makes all the more puzzling the question of what he thinks he gains by continually transposing the parts of speech:

the green whereless truth

of an eternal now welcomes each was

of whom among not numerable ams . . .

may i achieve another steepest thing.

If anything is gained by these substitutions for the ordinary nouns and adjectives of finiteness and infinity, time and eternity, it is gained at a cost so inordinate as to cancel the profit. The device of accumulating modifiers before noun or verb is more effective, but Mr. Cummings frequently uses with it a trick of meaningless syntactical displacement which appears to have the same disadvantages as does the transposition of the parts of speech:

*open green those
(dear)
worlds of great
more eyes.*

Well, according to conservative theory, this technical disorder ought long since to have made a universal prey of Mr. Cummings' verse and last eat up itself. Yet Mr. Cummings has gone on writing steadily at or near his best for twenty years now and shows no signs of dangerous self-absorption. This is in itself a considerable accomplishment in a time when the all-I-wish-to-preserve of so many poets of his age goes into a very thin volume. It may just be that Mr. Cummings has discovered a virtue in disorder unknown to Ulysses and that his critics have been preaching all this time to a Trojan rather than to the Greeks.

Perhaps the most interesting of these poets is Mr. Warren; interesting because, being a kind of academic poet, he has not only investigated the possibilities of a large number of influences but studied them to the point where he does not produce a pastiche so much as a recreation (e.g., "The Garden," "Love's Parable"); interesting because, partly at least as a consequence, he is still developing not only in style but in theme. For all his technical skill, and it has been great from the beginning, you feel that only in the most recent poems has he completely absorbed his influences and settled on a voice of his own; and given the evidence of these poems as to the range of experience which is available to him, it is reasonable to suppose that he has only begun to state what he comprehends. It is this perhaps more than anything else which commands the reader's respect; for there are real possibilities of major poetry here.

I do not mean to imply that there is anything novel in the way of an idea here; it is rather that Mr. Warren has made his theme his own and finds it at the heart of every experience he touches. This is the theme of the consciousness which, driven in on itself for certitude, has suffered such division that it is no longer capable of self-knowledge, of integrity. For him, not the world but man's self "has crumbled out again to his atomies." His poems are investigations of the consequences of this disintegration, of man's incapacity for the integrated act "which alone is pure"; for terror: "For yours, like a puppy, is darling and inept"; for courage:

*But a good pointer holds the point
And is not gun-shy;
But I
Am gun-shy;*

for love:

*But darkness on the landscape grew
As in our bosoms darkness, too;
And that was what we took away.*

Or they are studies of the mirages of integrity, of the murderer who "snatched at the fleeting hem [of peace], though in error." Or they are a contemplation of our positive incapacity to understand those who had this integrity in the past:

*They will not turn their faces to you though you call,
Who pace a logic merciless as light,
Whose law is their long shadow on the grass . . .
And speculation rasps its idiot nails
Across the dry slate where you did the sum;*

and of our inability to use the insufficient but apparently complete integrations which were our childhood selves and the places which were a part of them. You go back to them, like Billie Potts,

*To drink not of the stream but of your deep identity,
But water is water and it flows*

and the father "is evil and ignorant and old."

You came back.

For there is no place like home.

There is still some discontinuity between action and comment in "The Ballad of Billie Potts" as there was among the various actions of *At Heaven's Gate*; but the poem covers a really remarkable amount of ground. I would guess that Mr. Warren is at that point which Mr. MacLeish reached ten years ago, where a poet of great talent has earned his inheritance and is ready to use it for his own enterprises. I do not mean this parallel to sound ominous, for it seems to me there is reasonable evidence here that history is not going to repeat itself.

ARTHUR MIZENER

Variety

The Progress of Cultural Bolshevism (cont'd)

THE NATIONALIST reaction in American writing is of course part and parcel of the world-wide campaign against cultural Bolshevism—that is to say, against all cultural forms of dissidence and experiment. This campaign has been dealt with in *PARTISAN REVIEW* again and again, and in the last issue Alex Comfort reported on its progress in England. Now Bernard DeVoto has come along with his book *The Literary Fallacy*, as vicious and mindless a tract as any so far produced by those who have set themselves the task of subverting the critical spirit of modern art and thought. It deserves to be noticed, if only to keep the record straight.

First, as to the reactions to DeVoto. Some counterblows were struck, but the most widely-read reply—that of Sinclair Lewis in *The Saturday Review of Literature*—turned out to be little more than a lively exercise in vituperation. For what is Lewis doing if not playing possum when he denies that the literature of the nineteen-twenties was dominated by any specific movement or tendency? And what point is there in his dragging in the names of people like Booth Tarkington and Edith Wharton? Such names in no way

prove that the creative work of the twenties is without unity and that DeVoto is therefore attacking something which has no real existence. The representative figures of that decade are well known to everyone. Lewis's strategy shows him up as belying his own past, as repudiating the very movement in the absence of which it is inconceivable that he could have written either *Main Street* or *Babbitt*. He rejects implicitly what his seeming antagonist, DeVoto, rejects explicitly. Like Van Wyck Brooks and, for all one knows, DeVoto too, Lewis is a fugitive from an earlier self.

But for sheer brashness in proclaiming bourgeois - philistine values, DeVoto beats all comers; and he is a terrible show-off besides. He is familiar with a great many details of American history, and he insists on exhibiting his knowledge, regardless of its degree of relevance to the subject at hand. Thus he writes a really incredible chapter—and that in a book of six short chapters—in which he goes on page after page telling us with a straight face all about the advances made by American medical men in the treatment of burns and about John Wesley Powell, a geologist who helped develop the Forest Service, the National Park Service and several learned societies, and who wrote, among other books, a *Report on the*

Lands of the Arid Regions of the United States. "Mr. Brooks has not heard about it," gloats DeVoto, "nor Mr. Mumford, Mr. Stearns, Mr. Lewisohn, Mr. Frank, Mr. Parrington, or Mr. Hicks, not even Mr. Edmund Wilson or Mr. Kazin."

Perhaps none of those ill-assorted gentlemen ever "heard about it," but if DeVoto had any sense of method in handling ideas he would have kept the treatment of burns out of it, and Powell too. If his point is, however, that ours is a great and wonderful country precisely because of such phenomena, then he must be laboring under the delusion that America has a monopoly on medical scientists and public-spirited geologists. Furthermore, neither Brooks nor any other critic of American life has ever complained of our insufficient progress in applied science and technology. On the contrary.

It is DeVoto, also, who gives us the true-blue American version of the reactionary fantasy that Proust caused the fall of France. He declares that it is the "description of the United States as a pluto-democracy and its people as degenerate" in the writing of the twenties which "forms the basis of Hitler's understanding of America in *Mein Kampf* and elsewhere, and of countless millions of words broadcast for many years by the propaganda agencies of Nazi Germany. . . . The correspondence is so so obvious, so often an identity, that there must be a causal relationship between them." Here you have the essence of what our re-

trograde times have produced—the *amalgam* palmed off as the leading argument and as the answer to all questions. And as usual the main ingredient of the amalgam is the charge of aiding the enemy, a charge indispensable in any attempt to ban independent thought and all criticism of things as they are. As for the "literary fallacy"—defined by DeVoto as the overvaluation of literature as against life—who holds to it more than he does, when he attributes to the work of literary men so much political weight and power?

Among the writers he belabors is T. S. Eliot, whom he accuses of having written disrespectfully about such "little people" as the young man carbuncular and the typist home at teatime. He asserts that since people of that sort stood up to the blitz, the author of *The Waste Land* ought to hang his head in shame! But suppose we grant DeVoto his morale-division test of poetic truth. He still must account for the fact that the German young man carbuncular and the German typist also stood up to the blitz—a fact which, in his terms, would tend to prove that fascism is as good as democracy.

Where his worst philistinism comes out is in his attitude toward the war. He sees the war as a spiritual triumph that once and for all gives the lie to the criticism of modern life contained in modern literature. It never occurs to him that the virulence and pessimism of that literature have been completely justified by this war.

No wonder he maintains that whereas American society was "rugged, lively and vital" in the twenties, American writing "became increasingly debilitated, capricious, querulous and irrelevant." Writers repudiated their country and shut themselves off from its realities. Now a charge of this kind could be substantiated, it seems to me, only in one way, and that is by analyzing some of the typical and outstanding works of that period (say *Babbitt*, *The Great Gatsby*, *The Triumph of the Egg*, *Beyond the Horizon*, *The American Tragedy*, etc.) so as to show that there is no correspondence between them and the national life, that their revelation of the national character and conduct is either false or irrelevant. Yet this DeVoto fails to do. For the most part he is content merely to hurl accusations and "to glow belligerently with his country," to borrow a phrase aimed by Henry James at the DeVotos of a past age. And whenever DeVoto does come down to cases he unknowingly proves the reverse of what he set out to prove.

This becomes particularly clear in his dealings with Brooks. The latter is an obsessive theme with DeVoto and a rather gratuitous one, as he and Brooks are now comrades-in-arms. For DeVoto locates the source of the literature of the twenties in the early work of Brooks—a notion patently nonsensical. A literature of such dimensions and variety can hardly be characterized otherwise than as an organic expression of

American society. To be sure, the early Brooksonian thesis influenced a good many writers, but DeVoto falls into sheer twaddle in blaming Brooks for the faults of novelists like Lewis and Hemingway. The truth is that it is exactly the Brooksonian thesis which best explains those faults. The lack of "maturity of mind, maturity of emotion, complexity of character and experience" in both Lewis and Hemingway is not to be explained in terms of the "literary fallacy," for no two authors are less addicted to making literature the measure of existence; it can be adequately accounted for only in relation to those forces in American life, charted by Brooks in such studies as *Letters and Leadership* and *America's Coming of Age*, which frustrate the artist and arrest his development. These forces are still dominant in American civilization, and a critic like DeVoto is helping to perpetuate their dominance when he attacks the writers who at one time tried to overcome it.

When it comes to evaluating the literary art of the modern age Brooks and DeVoto now see eye to eye. Brooks, looking to poor dear old Whittier for his salvation, is more archaic in his approach. DeVoto is not quite so predisposed in favor of the past. In his judgment the best American writers of our time are Carl Sandburg, E. A. Robinson, Willa Cather, Stephen Vincent Benét and Robert Frost. The real trouble with him, one suspects, is that he hates literature.

PHILIP RAHV

The Sixth Turn of the Communist Screw

THE SIXTH period of official communism is now in flower, with a scent very attractive to many a wandering and weary fly. The list runs: (1) War Communism, 1918-21; (2) the NEP, 1921-28; (3) the Third Period, 1928-35; (4) the Popular Front, 1935-39; (5) the Hitler Pact, 1939-41; (6) the new period, dating really, after an inter-regnum, from Stalin-grad. No name for it has yet become established, but it may well be known as the Teheran Period.

We note an oscillation from left to right. Even the period of the Hitler Pact, in spite of what a doctrinaire might argue, was in form a swing from the right of the Popular Front to a leftism, with an international revival of anti-war, anti-imperialist and proletarian slogans, as well as of the more provocative tactics which had been dropped during the Popular Front.

Nevertheless, the movement of communist policy has not been pendulum-like. Though it swings from left to right and back, it develops as it goes, in a spiral path that leaves the origin ever farther behind. Let us take, for example, the three rightist periods (2nd, 4th and 6th). The first of these is symbolized by the Anglo-Soviet Trade-Union Committee: i.e., a united front with non-communist labor organizations; the second, by the Popular Front in France: i.e., a bloc with the liberal bourgeois Radical Socialists; the third (the

present), by the Free German movement or the second Badoglio Government: i.e., a bloc including reactionary conservatives (von Seydlitz) and fascists. It is apparent that this new period is not at all a Popular Front as this was understood eight years ago. Earl Browder did not praise the NAM in those days, nor did communist labor leaders (like Bridges today) condemn *all* strikes.

As in the case of any spiral motion, when a turn is completed, you are in one sense back where you started from, but in another you are closer to where you were a half-turn ago. So too with communist policy. In form, a left period seems to swing to the opposite pole from the preceding right period, and to be back at the position of the period before last. But from another point of view, the new period is closer to the one immediately preceding it. The Popular Front is closer to the Third Period than to the NEP, in spite of the rhetorical appearances; the present period is in sociological content closer to the Hitler Pact than to the Popular Front; the Third Period, closer to the NEP than to War Communism.

What brings about these shifts from period to period? There is no single answer. Each seems to be correlated with internal socio-economic and political changes within the Soviet Union, and with alterations, or presumed alterations, in world political conditions. The recently published book, *Management in Russian Industry and Agriculture*, suggests another

correlate of the movement, one, moreover, which not merely clarifies some of the shifts between periods, but, more significant, links them all together in a manner to show the cumulative development.

Up to the 5th period (the Hitler Pact), which was imposed by external events, each shift has been correlated with a sharp change in the management of Soviet industry. Under War Communism, a plant was run by a "specialist" of the old regime and a commissar. During the NEP, a plant was run by "the triangle": a manager, still usually a specialist of the old regime, a party cell, and a trade-union committee. In 1928, the Shakhty Trial marked the end of most of the old-regime specialists, and the liquidation of the Right Opposition accompanied the final collapse of the power of the union committees. During the Third Period, the managers were for the most part hastily trained old-time party members, the "Red Specialists." The Trials of 1936-38, an internal counterpoint of the Popular Front, signified, among other things, the end of the Red Specialists, and their replacement in the factories by much better trained young men of the post-revolutionary Stalinist crop.

During all of these changes and until now, however, there has continued a consistent single development: the growth and increasing consolidation of the new Soviet ruling class, a class in which the bureaucracy, the army hierarchy, and the managers fuse into a great

social grouping with its roots firmly in the economy through its extension as the managerial personnel of the nationalized industry and collectivized agriculture.

As the communist movement travels up the spiral, whether left or right at the moment, this class is taking on historical flesh and blood, and is gradually emancipating itself from the initial social bases of the revolution. During the NEP, its united fronts could go no farther than proletarian organizations; by the Popular Front it was sure enough of itself to jump over to liberal bourgeois; today Ercoli can sit with Badoglio, and Pieck with von Seydlitz. Organizationally, its freedom of action is promoted by the perfecting of the international communist movement as a hardened, fully trained, absolutely reliable and remarkably flexible tool.

This does not mean that there will be no more swings back to left in the propaganda and tactics of official communism. The object of the present (Teheran) period is to end the European phase of the war on a basis favorable to the perspectives of the Soviet ruling class: i.e., in *de facto* Stalinist domination of the Continent. But this period itself, unlike the earlier five, is not undifferentiatedly either right or left: things are not so mechanical nowadays, and in parts of Europe it is a left period. It is rightist in the United States, and in the Western Hemisphere generally, because the plans for Europe call for the present appeasement of America as the best way

to get a comparatively free political hand in Europe. But here too it can readily change once more.

Are there signs of preparations for such a change, even while the Communist Party (by unanimous vote, of course) is transformed into a polite educational society? There are such signs. Among them are a few quibbles that have crept into *Pravda* recently (as on the occasion of the meeting of the Bank for International Settlements), objecting to bankers and especially international bankers. Then there was, in early May, the mutiny led by the communist directed Elam in the Greek army and navy—an armed and bloody clash, in substance, between Great Britain and the Soviet Union.

More weighted are omens in the East. Early this year, the Soviet Union concluded a treaty with Japan. Today, Japanese troops, the best of them by all reports drawn from Manchuria, are engaged in large-scale and successful campaigns in China. In March there began to appear all through

the American press a swarm of articles buzzing about corruption, tyranny, collusion and anti-Western agitation in Chiang Kai-shek China. Why all at once so many? And reporters began to insist on visiting Communist China. Why just at the same time?

Suppose that, with his European affairs more or less in order, Stalin does not think the total defeat of Japan such a good notion as a weakened Japan left as a buffer, and joint expansion with Japan into China? What then will the communist policy in the United States be? It can all be—perhaps has all been—mapped in advance. The 7th, the new leftist period, will have its made-to-order propaganda, slogans and tactics. And woe then to war-mongers! We Want Our Boys Home Again! Don't Let Our Daddies Die in the Jungles! Remember Washington! No Yank Blood for British Blood-suckers! A Cheer for Comrades Villard and Rankin!

JAMES BURNHAM